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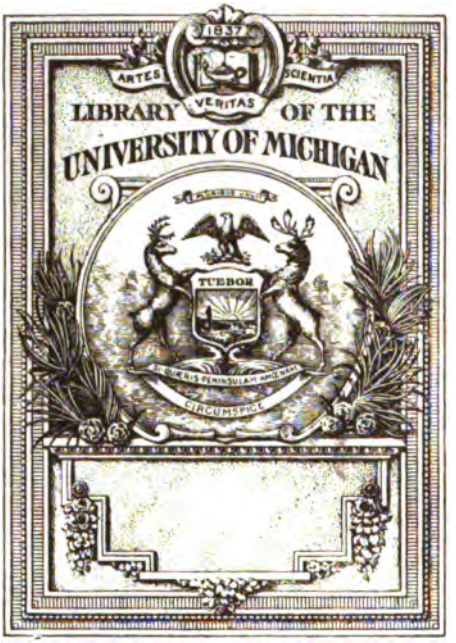
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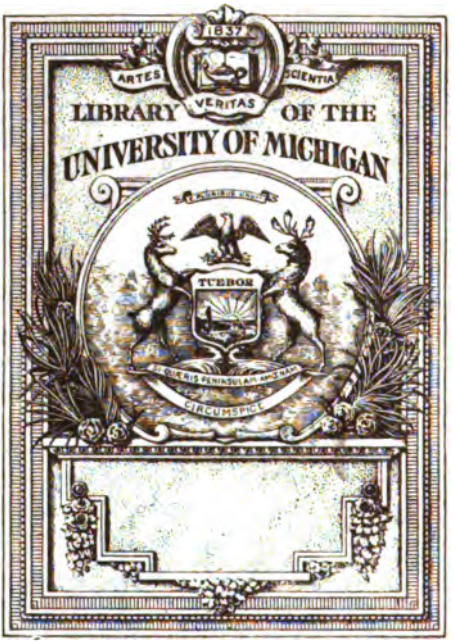
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THE

WORKS

OF

THOMAS SECKER, LL.D.

LATE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

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CONTENTS.

SERMON XCV.

An Explanation and Defence of the Liturgy of the Church of England.

1 Cor. xiv. 15.

——I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the underſtanding alſo: I will ſing with the Spirit, and I will ſing with the underſtanding alſo, - - - 1

SERMON XCVI.

The ſame, - - - - 14

SERMON XCVII.

The ſame, - - - - 27

SERMON XCVIII.

The Sacred Scriptures the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.

1 Pet. v. 12.

——Exhorting and teſtifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand, - - - - 42

312809

SERMON XCIX.

The same, - - - - 56

SERMON C.

The same, - - - - 69

SERMON CI.

The same, - - - - 83

SERMON CII.

The same, - - - - 96

SERMON CIII.

The Great Importance in Life of Frequent Reflection and Self-Examination.

HAGGAI i. 5.

Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways, - - - - 109

SERMON CIV.

Pardon, Grace, and Everlasting Life, to be obtained only through the Merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 COR. v. 21.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 120

SERMON CV.

The Fatal Conſequences of a Partial Obedience to the Commandments of God.

JAMES ii. 10.

For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all, - - - 129

SERMON CVI.

The Juſt Eſtimate of the Shortneſs of Human Life, and our Proper Employment here.

PSALM xc. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom, - - - 141

SERMON CVII.

The ſame, - - - - 253

SERMON CVIII.

The Certainty of the Communication of Divine (tho' Inviſible) Influences to Good Men.

JOHN xv. 26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he ſhall teſtify of me, - 166

SERMON CIX.

The Certainty of Divine Aid being Imparted to all Men who Fear God, and Endeavour Seriously to Observe his Moral Precepts.

JOHN xiv. 15, 16, 17.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever:

Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, 179

SERMON CX.

The only Satisfying Evidence that a Portion of the Spirit of God is Imparted to Men, is the Uniform Display of Practical Piety and Virtue.

GAL. v. 22, 23.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law, - - - 190

SERMON CXI.

Good Men have the Evidence in their own Breast that God Aids and Loves them.

ROM. viii. 16.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, - - - 202

SERMON CXII.

On the Proper Obſervance of the Sabbath.

GEN. ii. 3.

And God bleſſed the ſeventh day, and ſanctified it; becauſe that in it he had reſted from all his work, which God created and made, - - - - 214

SERMON CXIII.

The ſame, - - - - 228

SERMON CXIV.

The ſame, - - - - 241

SERMON CXV.

On the Great, but Little Underſtood, Duty of Moderation, in Sentiment and Manners.

PHIL. iv. 5.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand, - - - - 254

SERMON CXVI.

On the Contraſt of Reſpect and Remembrance, and of Contempt and Forgetfulneſs to Good and Bad Men.

PROV. x. 7.

The memory of the juſt is bleſſed: but the name of the wicked ſhall rot, - - - - 265

BX
5133
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SERMON CXXIV.

(Preached on a General Faſt.)

Wherein Public Happineſs conſiſts;—how we are to Expreſs our Regard of it;—and the Advantages which Flow from this Expreſſion.

PSALM cxxii. 6.

O pray for the peace of Jeruſalem: *They ſhall proſper that love thee,* - - - 373

SERMON CXXV.

(Preached *April* 25. 1749, on the Thankſgiving for the Peace.)

On the Bleſſings of Peace.—They are the Gift of God.

PSALM xxix. 10.

——*The Lord ſhall give his people the bleſſing of peace,* 388

SERMON CXXVI.

(Preached before the UNIVERSITY of OXFORD, on ACT SUNDAY, in the Afternoon, *July* 8. 1733.)

The Advantage of a Right Education.

DEUT. xxxii. 46, 47.

And he ſaid unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I teſtify among you this day; which ye ſhall command your children to obſerve to do all the words of this law.

For it is not a vain thing for you: Becauſe it is your life; and through this thing ye ſhall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to poſſeſs it, - 404

SERMON CXXVII.

(Preached in the Parish Church of St. *James*, *Westminster*, *January* 30. 1733-4.)

On Reverence of Divine Providence in Governing all the Affairs of Men.

ISA. xxvi. 9.

—When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness, - - - 421

SERMON CXXVIII.

(Preached in the Parish Church of St. *James*, *Westminster*, *November* 27. 1737, being the *Sunday* after the Death of her Majesty the late Queen *Caroline*.)

The Advantages of Visiting the Mansions of Distress.

ECCLES. vii. 4.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, 432

SERMON CXXIX.

(Preached in the Parish Church of St. *Bridget*, *London*, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, *&c.* on *Monday* in *Easter Week*, 1738.)

On Christian Beneficence and Liberality.

1 PET. iv. 10.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, - - - - - 444

SERMON CXXX.

(Preached before the Houſe of Lords, in the Abbey Church of *Weſtminſter*, on *Thurſday*, *May* 29. 1739.)

On Speculative Faith, and Ingratitude to God in Practice.

PSALM cvi. 12, 13.

Then believed they his words, they ſang his praiſe: they ſoon forgat his works, they waited not for his counſel, 460

SERMON CXXXI.

(Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Goſpel in Foreign Parts, in the Pariſh Church of St. *Mary-le-Bone*, *on Friday*, *February* 20. 1740-1.)

On Chriſtian Benevolence and Compaſſion to the Savage and Barbarous Nations.

MARK vi. 34.

And Jeſus, when he came out, ſaw much people; and was moved with compaſſion towards them, becauſe they were as ſheep not having a ſhepherd: and he began to teach them many things, - - - - 472

SERMON CXXXII.

(Preached in the Pariſh Church of *Chriſt Church*, *London*, on *Thurſday*, *May* 6. 1743, being the time of the Yearly Meeting of the Children educated in the Charity-ſchools, in and about the Cities of *London* and *Weſtminſter*.)

The great Uſefulneſs of Schools for the Poor, when Regulated by Wiſdom and Prudence.

ROM. xiv. 16.

Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of, - 495

SERMON CXXXIII.

(Preached in the Parish Church of St. *James, Westminster, March* 11. 1749-50, on Occasion of the Earthquake, *March* 8.)

On the Reverence Due to Divine Providence, on Occasion of Striking Calamities to Nations or Cities.

PSALM ii. 11.

Serve the Lord with fear; and rejoice unto him with reverence, - - - - 523

SERMON CXXXIV.

(Preached at the Parish-Church of St. *James, Westminster, December* 30. 1750. on Resigning the Rectory.)

A True Christian Pastor's Valedictory Address to his Flock.

2 COR. xiii. 11.

Finally, brethren, farewell, - - 542

SERMON CXXXV.

(Preached before the Governors of the *London* Hospital, or Infirmary, for the Relief of Sick and Diseased Persons, especially Manufacturers, and Seamen in Merchants Service, *&c.* at the Parish-Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, on *Wednesday, February* 20. 1754.)

Simplicity Mingled with Liberality, Activity with Governing, and Cheerfulness with Mercy, Striking Marks of the Christian Spirit.

ROM. xii. 8.

—He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness, 558

SERMON CXXXVI.

(Preached in the Church of St. *Mary-le-Bone, December* 4, 1754, at the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Societies.)

Religious Converſation Regulated by Time, Place, and Circumſtances, an Evidence of the General Chriſtian Temper and Spirit.

MALACHI iii. 16.

Then they, that feared the Lord, ſpoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name, 576

SER-

SERMON XCV.

An Explanation and Defence of the Liturgy of the Church of England.

1 Cor. xiv. 15.

——I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the Underſtanding alſo: I will ſing with the Spirit, and I will ſing with the Underſtanding alſo.

I HAVE hitherto explained and vindicated the daily ſervice of our Church, as far as the creed; which is placed between the third part of it, the leſſons, and the fourth, the petitions; that we may expreſs that faith in what we have heard, which is the ground of what we are about to aſk. For *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God** ; ſo we muſt *aſk in faith*, if we *think to receive any thing of the Lord*†. For *how ſhall we call upon Him, in whom we have not believed*‡? But as all the doctrines of ſcripture, though equally true, are not of equal importance; the more neceſſary articles have been, from the beginning of Chriſtianity, collected into one body, called in ſcripture, *the form of ſound words*§, *the words of faith*‖, *the principles of the doctrine of Chriſt*¶; but in our common way of ſpeaking at preſent, the *creed*, from the *Latin* word, *credo*, which ſignifies, *I believe*. Now the ancient churches had many ſuch creeds; ſome longer, ſome ſhorter; differing on ſeveral heads in phraſe, but agreeing in method and ſenſe; of which, that called the *apoſtles creed*, is one. And it deſerves this name, not ſo much from any certainty, or great likelihood, that the apoſtles drew it up in theſe very expreſſions, (though ſome, pretty early,

* Rom. x. 17. † James i. 6. 7. ‡ Rom. x. 14. § 2 Tim. i. 13. ‖ 1 Tim. iv. 6. ¶ Heb. vi. 1.

and many ſince, have imagined they did), as becauſe it contains the chief apoſtolic doctrines; and was uſed by a Church, which, before it grew corrupt, was juſtly reſpected as the chief apoſtolic ſettlement; I mean, the *Roman*.

As *with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, ſo with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation* *; of which confeſſion, repeating our creed, though not a neceſſary, is a rational and commendable act. We do not indeed find it to have made part of the oldeſt public offices; but ſurely it is full as proper for theſe, as for private devotions, in which the primitive Chriſtians all ſaid it daily †. And as every one's profeſſion of belief is his own ſeparate act, ſo the creed is worded for every one ſeparately in the ſingular number: and therefore unleſs we ſay it along with the miniſter, he alone teſtifies his faith; not we, ours. Nor ſhould it by any means be with negligence and indifference, that we profeſs our faith. For what we believe is the only juſt foundation of what we do, or hope, or fear. On this account, we ſtand at the repeating of the creed, to expreſs our [illegible]ſs in it, and our readineſs to *contend earneſtly*, in every proper method, *for the faith once delivered to the ſaints* ‡. Turning at the ſame time towards the eaſt, as many do, is an ancient cuſtom; as indeed, in moſt religions, men have directed their worſhip ſome particular way. And this practice being intended only to honour *Chriſt*, the ſun of righteouſneſs, who hath riſen upon us, to enlighten us with that doctrine of ſalvation, which we then declare our adherence to, it ought not to be condemned as ſuperſtition; and yet, being [illegible] obligatory in itſelf, nor commanded by authority, the omiſſion of it ought not to be cenſured as irreverence or diſobedience.

Another thing, yet more uſual in ſaying the creed, is to bow, when the name of *Jeſus* is mentioned. And ſome have thought that to be their duty, whenever it is mentioned, at leaſt in divine ſervice; becauſe they find in their bibles the words

* Rom. x. 10.

† Symbolum quoque ſpecialiter debemus—antelucanis Horis quotidie recenſere. Ambroſ. de Virg. l. 3. p. 115. ap. BINGH. l. 10. c. 4. § 17. Quis non quotidie recitat ore, Credo, &c. Lib. de duplici Martyrio, Cypriano falſo aſcript. in fine.

‡ Jude ver. 3.

words, *that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow* *. But this is no ancient notion; and the generality of judicious commentators allow it not to be the meaning of the place; a more exact tranſlation of which would be, *that in the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow*, that is, every one ſhould pray; according to that other paſſage of St. *Paul, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he would grant you*, &c †. However, it is a practice of ſome antiquity, and, whatever a few over-ſcrupulous people have imagined, ſurely a harmleſs one; for nobody means to worſhip the ſound, but the perſon whom it denotes. And though we confeſs, there is no more reaſon to worſhip the Son of God, by bowing to him, than the Father, nor to worſhip him on hearing the name *Jeſus*, than the name *Chriſt*; yet it is not good to be *contentious* about an innocent *cuſtom* ‡, which alſo may help attention, and increaſe devotion. Beſides, it is authoriſed by the 18th canon of our church, which directs, that *when, in time of divine ſervice, the Lord Jeſus ſhall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence ſhall be done by all perſons preſent, as it hath been accuſtomed.* Poſſibly theſe laſt words may be deſigned to intimate, that fear of giving offence by leaving off the cuſtom, was a principal motive to the injunction. And if ſo, in proportion as that danger abates, the injunction grows leſs important. Accordingly, they who are intruſted with the execution of the canons, have not lately, if ever, enforced it, or laid ſtreſs upon it. And indeed, as the greater part of moſt congregations diſregard it, except in the creed, they ought not to judge hardly of thoſe who omit it then alſo; however proper they may think it, for themſelves, to diſtinguiſh that part of their belief, which peculiarly belongs to them as Chriſtians, from the preceding, by this geſture.

Having explained the apoſtles creed at large, in ſeveral lectures on the catechiſm, I ſhall add nothing more concerning it here. But there will be need to take ſome notice of another, appointed to be rehearſed in its ſtead, on the principal feſtivals, and ſeveral other holidays, and called the creed of St. *Athanaſius*; not that he was the author of it, though it was probably made pretty near, if not in his time, who lived 1400

* Phil. ii. 10. † Eph. iii. 14. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 16.

years ago; but becauſe it expreſſes that faith in the Trinity, of which he was a principal defender. And as the *Romaniſts* threw on the reformers of our church all manner of calumnies that they could, ſo it would have given them a great handle againſt us, had this creed, which they repeat every Sunday, been rejected or altered by us.

Many indeed have argued againſt the uſe of it, and ſome with ſtrange vehemence; partly from the doctrines which it teaches; but chiefly from the condemnation which it pronounces on all who diſbelieve them. Now the doctrines are undeniably the ſame with thoſe that are contained in the articles of our church, in the beginning of our litany, in the concluſions of many of our collects, in the *Nicene* creed, and, as we conceive, in that of the apoſtles, in the doxology, in the form of baptiſm, in numerous paſſages of both teſtaments; only here they are ſomewhat more diſtinctly ſet forth, to prevent equivocations. Any one, who examines into the matter, will eaſily ſee it to be ſo. Accordingly our diſſenting brethren, after they had long objected to other parts of our liturgy, conſented readily to ſubſcribe this creed; the articles of which are the common faith of the Catholic Church, or by immediate conſequence deducible from it, and little or nothing more. There are indeed ſeveral things in them, beyond our comprehenſion, as to the manner; but the ſcripture hath the ſame. There are expreſſions, which may ſeem liable to exception; but it muſt be for want of underſtanding them, or admitting fair interpretations of them. The aſſertion, that *there is one Father, not three Fathers*, and ſo on, may appear to the ignorant, needleſs and trifling; but was levelled againſt hereſies then in being, which took away all diſtinction between the three perſons. That *none is before or after other*, means, (as the following words, *but the whole three perſons are coeternal*, prove) that none is ſo in point of time, not that none is ſo in the order of our conceptions; for the ſcripture directs us to conſider the Father, as firſt. That *none is greater or leſs than another*, is reconciled to our Saviour's aſſertion, *The Father is greater than I* *, by what follows in the creed, *equal as touching his Godhead, inferior as touching his*

* John xiv. 28.

his manhood. That he is *one, altogether, not by confuſion of ſubſtance, but by unity of perſon,* means, (for ſo the next words explain it,) that as each of us is one man, not at all by blending the ſoul and body into one ſubſtance, for they are ſtill diſtinct, but *altogether*, by a myſterious union of the two: ſo he is one Chriſt, not at all by blending the divine and human nature into one ſubſtance, but altogether, entirely and ſolely, by an union of them, yet more myſterious than the former is.

The condemnation, contained in two or three clauſes of this creed, belongs, (as the moſt zealous defenders of our faith in the holy Trinity agree, and as every one who reads it conſiderately, will ſoon perceive), not to all, who cannot underſtand, or cannot approve, every expreſſion in it; but only to ſuch, as deny in general *the Trinity in Unity*, or three perſons, who are one God. *This* alone is ſaid to be *the Catholic faith.* The words, that follow after, *For there is one perſon of the Father*, and ſo on, are deſigned only to ſet this forth more particularly. And the concluſion from the whole is, not that *in all things*, which are *aforeſaid*, by the uſe of every term above mentioned, but *in all things*, AS IS *aforeſaid, the Unity in Trinity is to be worſhipped*; meaning, that as at firſt it was ſaid, that in all acts of faith we are to believe in each perſon, ſo here it is added, that in all acts of worſhip we are to adore each; never conſidering one, even while addreſſed diſtinctly, as ſeparated or ſeparable from the other two. Now this Trinity in Unity we apprehend to have been, ever ſince it was fully revealed, a fundamental article of the Chriſtian faith. And yet thoſe, who believe not even ſo much, the creed no otherwiſe teaches *cannot be ſaved*, or *ſhall without doubt periſh*, than as our Saviour teaches concerning the whole of the goſpel: *He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned* *. Our condemnation is no more hard and uncharitable, than his. And neither is ſo; becauſe both are to be interpreted with due exceptions and abatements. Suppoſe a collection of Chriſtian duties had been drawn up; and it had been ſaid, in the beginning or at the end of it, *This is the Catholic* practice, *which except a man* obſerve *faithfully, he cannot be ſaved*; would

* Mark xvi. 16.

would not every one underſtand, that allowance muſt be made for ſuch things as a man through involuntary ignorance miſtook, or through mere infirmity failed in, or was truly ſorry for, as far as he knew he had cauſe? Why then are not the ſame allowances to be underſtood, in ſpeaking of doctrines? For when the creed ſays, that *Whoever will be ſaved, before all things it is neceſſary that he hold the Catholic faith*; it doth not mean, that true faith is more *neceſſary*, than right practice; but that naturally it precedes it, and is to be firſt learnt in order to it. The intention therefore of the creed, as well as of our Lord in the goſpel, is only to ſay, that whoever rejects the doctrine of it, from preſumptous ſelf-opinion, or wilful negligence, and doth not afterwards repent of theſe faults, particularly if he is made ſenſible of them, or if not, at leaſt in general, amongſt his unknown ſins, the caſe of ſuch a one is deſperate. But if want of information, weakneſs of apprehenſion, or even excuſable wrongneſs of diſpoſition, ſhould make him doubt or diſbelieve any or the main part of this creed; nay, which is vaſtly a worſe caſe, the whole revelation of Chriſtianity; though we paſs judgment on his errors without reſerve, and, in general, on all who maintain them; yet perſonally and ſingly we preſume not to judge of his condition in the next world. *To his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth* *. Much leſs would we think unfavourably of any one, who takes theſe condemning clauſes in too rigorous a ſenſe, and therefore only is afraid, from a ſpirit of charity and humility, to join in them. Indeed, for the ſake of ſuch, it may ſeem pity, but either they had been originally omitted; (ſince though defenſible, they are not neceſſary to be inſerted in a profeſſion of faith;) or the limitations, with which they are to be underſtood, had been ſignified in two or three comprehenſive words.

After our creed, we go on to our petitions. In theſe, the miniſter and people firſt recommend each other to our bleſſed Redeemer, in terms of ſcripture, which a council, held near 1200 years ago†, affirms to be uſed for this purpoſe by the direction of the apoſtles, and may certainly well be uſed

* Rom. xiv. 4. † Conc. Bracarenſe 1 A. D. 563. Can. xvi.

ſo without it; *The Lord be with you* : And with thy Spirit* †: Then we make a direct application to him, under the names of *Lord* and *Chriſt*, repeating it thrice, as a mark of our earneſtneſs, that he would *have mercy upon us*: Words often addreſſed to him, when on earth: often ſolemnly reiterated by the whole ancient Church, and ſpoken by the *Latin* Church in the original *Greek* of the New Teſtament, Κυριε ελεησον ‡, but much more prudently tranſlated by ours into *Engliſh*.

This done, as before we ſubjoined the Lord's prayer to our confeſſion, to obtain the confirmation of our pardon; ſo now we prefix it to our requeſts, as a ſummary of our deſires. And ſurely ſaying it again at ſuch a diſtance, and with ſo different a view, cannot be thought a *vain repetition* §.

After theſe general prayers, we expreſs to God diſtinctly, in ſhort ſentences, the ſeveral heads of the ſupplications, which we are about to offer up more at large, for peace, and grace, for the king, the clergy, and the people. And all theſe ſentences are conceived in words taken from the pſalms; excepting one, *Give peace in our time, O Lord*; which hath a reaſon added to it, by ſome thought improper: *Becauſe there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God*; whereas, ſay they, we often have others to fight for us; and if we had Him alone, why ſhould we deſpond, and immediately pray for peace upon it? But theſe objectors utterly miſtake our meaning; which is, that whatever help we have beſides, we look upon it as nothing, without that of the Almighty; whom therefore we beg, in the words which they unjuſtly blame, when we are in peace, to continue it, by reſtraining ſuch as would diſturb it; and when we are not, to reſtore it, by turning the hearts, or overthrowing the attempts, of thoſe who have infringed it.

In conſequence of theſe preparations, the petitions themſelves follow; not in one long prayer, but ſeveral ſhort ones; which method is certainly as lawful as the other; and, we think, more expedient. It reminds us oftener of the Attributes of God, and merits of Chriſt, which are the ground of our *aſking in faith* ‖; and by the frequency of ſaying, *Amen*, it

* 2 Theſſ. iii. 16. † 2 Tim. iv. 22. ‡ Matth. xv. 22. xx. 30, 31.
§ Matth. vi. 7. ‖ James i. 6.

it ſtirs up our attention, and warms our devotion, which are too apt to languiſh. Theſe ſhort prayers have the name of collects; either from their collecting much good matter, particularly out of ſcripture, into a ſmall compaſs; or from their being originally compoſed for the people to uſe, when collected and aſſembled together. And the firſt of theſe collects is, That for the day. Beſides the Lord's day, which is the weekly memorial of all God's goodneſs to us, and our duty to Him, we have annual ones, to celebrate, not only the principal parts of the hiſtory of Chriſt, but alſo the holy lives and deaths of his chief followers, who are mentioned in the New Teſtament. For, as *the righteous* are to *be had in everlaſting remembrance* *, and the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* particularly directed the firſt Chriſtians to *remember them, which had had the rule over them, who had ſpoken unto them the word of God* †; as they did accordingly pay diſtinguiſhed honours to the memories of the apoſtles, evangeliſts and martyrs; and as the church of *Rome*, which had gone much too far in this matter, would notwithſtanding have had a great advantage againſt us, if we had neglected it entirely; we do therefore, on the days which bear their names, read portions of holy writ relating to them, return thanks to God for their labours and example; and beg, that we may profit ſuitably by them. This, then, makes a conſiderable proportion of the variable collects. The reſt are appointed, one for each *Sunday* and week in the year: And the intention, however imperfectly executed, muſt have been, that ſometimes praying more explicitly for this grace or mercy, ſometimes for that, we may be likelier to obtain, through God's goodneſs, all that are needful for us.

The objection, that our ſervice is taken from the *Popiſh*, affects chiefly the collects. But thoſe of ours, which are the ſame with theirs, are moſtly derived from prayer-books, brought over in the days of that Pope, by whoſe means our *Saxon* anceſtors were converted to Chriſtianity, above 1100 years ago; and they were old ones then; much older, than the main errors of popery. However, partly at, and partly ſince, the reformation, ſuch of the collects in thoſe books

* *Pſ.* cxii. 6. † Heb. xiii. 7.

books, as wanted and deſerved it, have been carefully corrected; many that were thought improper, quite removed; and new ones framed in their ſtead. But why ſhould thoſe be changed, which are both faultleſs in themſelves, and recommended by venerable antiquity?

After the collect for the day, come two conſtant ones, to be uſed every day, *for peace and grace*; general words, comprehending between them all bleſſings, temporal and ſpiritual. In the former, which is tranſlated from the ancient *Latin* offices, we beſeech God, *in the knowledge of whom ſtandeth our* hope of *eternal life* heareafter, and *whoſe ſervice*, in proportion as we improve in it, gives us here *perfect freedom* from the tyranny of ſin, and the ſtings of an evil conſcience, would likewiſe ſo *defend us in all aſſaults of our* outward *enemies, that truſting in* Him, *we may not fear* them. Thus we embolden ourſelves, from the conſideration of his greater mercies, to hope for the leſſer: In imitation of the apoſtle's reaſoning, *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things**?

The latter of theſe collects is not taken from the *Roman*, but principally from the *Greek* ſervice, as others of our prayers beſides are: the compilers of our liturgy prudently extracting from both, what was proper to enrich and add authority to the work, in which they were engaged. And it begs that protection of God more eſpecially for the preſent day, which the former begs in general: but above all, *that we may fall into no ſin* even undeſignedly, much leſs *run into any kind of danger* of it wilfully, but *do always what is righteous in his ſight.*

After theſe collects, follows, on *Sundays*, *Wedneſdays*, and *Fridays*, the litany. But I ſhall ſpeak of that hereafter, God willing; and proceed now with the ſtated ſervice of the other days of the week: in which, having put up the before-mentioned prayers for ourſelves, we begin our interceſſions for other perſons; and firſt for *the king, as ſupreme*†: in obedience to the apoſtle's injunctions ‡, and in imitation of the primitive Chriſtians, even while they lived under Heathen emperors. The duties of that ſtation being very important and

* Rom. viii. 32. † 1 Pet. ii. 13. ‡ 1 Tim. ii. 1.

difficult, and the hazards of erring and ſinning in it many and great, we therefore pray Him, who is *the only ruler* of the heart and conduct *of princes*, and *beholds* the ſtate of *all the dwellers* in their dominions every where *on earth, to repleniſh our Sovereign*, both *with the graces and the gifts*, needful for him: *to grant him long to live in health and wealth*; that is, proſperity; as we pray God, in the litany, *to deliver us in all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth; to ſtrengthen him, that he may overcome all his enemies*, all that wiſh ill to him or his people; and, finally, to beſtow on him *everlaſting felicity*.

Then, becauſe the Royal Family are the future hopes of the public, and in the mean while their whole behaviour is of very great conſequence to it; we apply more diſtinctly than the ancient church did, but ſurely with reaſon, to *the fountain of all goodneſs*, who therefore is able to ſupply the branches, as well as the root, for ſuch bleſſings on every branch, eſpecially the principal by name, as their condition requires.

After this, we pray for the whole clergy and people of our land: that he, *who alone worketh great marvels*; who hath in all ages marvellouſly protected his church againſt the devil and wicked men; who endued his apoſtles with marvellous and miraculous gifts on the day of *Pentecoſt*, and by their means many others; who doth and ever will produce marvellous effects on the hearts of believers by the miniſtry of his word and ſacraments, and who only can do ſuch things; would *ſend down the healthful*, that is, the healing, ſtrengthening, and ſaving *Spirit of his grace, on all biſhops and curates*; perſons to whom the cure or care of ſouls is intruſted; for this the word *Curate*, ſignifies throughout the prayer-book, not merely thoſe miniſters who aſſiſt the proper incumbent; and likewiſe on *all congregations committed to their charge*. And we further beſeech him, not only to beſtow on them at firſt good diſpoſitions; but (*that they may truly* and laſtingly *pleaſe him*) *pour upon them his continual bleſſing*, like a kindly *dew* deſcending above. *For neither is he that plánteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increaſe* *.

Next

* 1 Cor. iii. 7.

Next to this, *in the time of war*, we addreſs ourſelves to the *Almighty Governor of all things*, whoſe *juſtice in puniſhing us ſinners* with this evil we acknowledge, and whoſe *mercy* to deliver us from it, on our *true repentance*, we hope for, and cannot hope for it elſe: complaining of the *pride* and *malice of our enemies*; of which they muſt be guilty, if the war on our ſide be lawful, otherwiſe there would be peace: and in the genuine ſpirit of Chriſtianity intreating, that the one may be *abated*, the other *aſſuaged*; which is praying for them, as well as ourſelves. And till they ſuffer their diſpoſitions to be mended, we beg that their *devices* and enterpriſes may be *confounded*: which word, as dreadful as it ſounds too often in paſſionate common ſpeech, means here no more than diſappointed: and this is the worſt we wiſh, even to thoſe *who hate us and deſpitefully uſe us* *.

There is alſo appointed a very fit *prayer to be read during the Seſſion of Parliament*, for a bleſſing on their conſultations. But here it may be aſked, how the compilers of it could venture to call in it every one of our kings, in all time to come, *moſt religious*. Now certainly they did not intend to propheſy, that, in the common meaning of the word, they always would be ſo: nor yet to require, that we ſhould call them ſo in a ſenſe, that was not true. And therefore they muſt either mean by *religious*, (what it ſometimes means in the language from which it is derived,) the object of moſt awful regard, ſacred, a title frequently aſcribed to kings: or indeed rather, *moſt religious* muſt be underſtood in the ſame manner, as the next word to it, *gracious*, conſtantly is, without the leaſt difficulty or ſcruple, both in the liturgy and out of it; and as the titles, *moſt Chriſtian*, and *moſt Catholic*, are to denote the good qualities which princes profeſs, and ſhould have; and therefore their ſubjects are willing and ought to hope they have; and by reminding them, endeavour that they may have. Accordingly this very epithet, *moſt religious*, was conſtantly aſcribed to all ſucceſſive emperors in St. *Chryſoſtom's* and St. *Baſil's* liturgies, the common ones of the *Greek* church, as it is to all ſucceſſive kings in ours. The intention being thus cleared, the lawfulneſs of joining in the expreſſion is evident.

* Matt. v. 44.

In the prudence of chooſing it originally, we are leſs concerned. Yet in defence of that we may plead, that this prayer was compoſed, and originally uſed in the reign of a prince, acknowledged to be unfeignedly religious, king *Charles* the Firſt *. And whatever ſcruples have been raiſed concerning the propriety of this part of it in ſome reigns, ſince happily there is no room for them in the preſent.

After theſe particular interceſſions, we add a general one for all mankind, eſpecially for all Chriſtians, and moſt eſpecially for all that are in affliction: to which we ſubjoin as general a thankſgiving for all God's mercies to us and them; but above all, for that which gives us a claim to eternal happineſs. Neither of theſe forms is taken from any other liturgy: both are excellent: and every one who deſires it, may, by ſignifying that deſire, have a ſeparate ſhare in either. This proviſion is a very uſeful and comfortable one: and we exhort you, on all fit occaſions, to take the advantage of it. Only we muſt beg, that they who have received benefit by being prayed for, will not forget to return thanks; but conſcientiouſly avoid our Saviour's reproof: *Were there not ten cleanſed? but where are the nine*†?

The general thankſgiving may perhaps to ſome appear ſuperfluous, after we have thanked and praiſed God in the uſe of the pſalms and hymns. But it was inſerted at the reſtoration, becauſe others complained it was wanting. And indeed it is a more methodical ſummary of the ſeveral mercies of God *to us and to all men*, than we had before: it furniſhes an opportunity of thanking him more expreſsly for the late inſtances of his *loving kindneſs* to the members of our own congregation: and beſides, as we cannot be too thankful to God, the acknowledgments, which we offered up in the beginning of the ſervice, are very properly repeated in the end. For ſurely we ought to aſk nothing of God, without remembering what we have received from him: which naturally excites both our faith and reſignation; and prepares the way for that admirable collect, with which we conclude.

It is taken from the middle of St. *Chryſoſtom's* liturgy; but much more judiciouſly placed in the cloſe of ours. It firſt

* See Wilkins Conc. vol. 4. p. 539. † Luke xvii. 17.

firſt thankfully confeſſes the great goodneſs of our bleſſed Redeemer, in diſpoſing our minds, of themſelves ſo variouſly and wrongly inclined, to aſk unanimouſly of Him ſuch things as we ought, and encouraging our applications by ſuch explicit aſſurances of hearing us. Then it ſubmits entirely to his wiſdom, in what manner, and how far, he will think it for our good to grant us any of our particular requeſts; begging nothing abſolutely, but what he hath abſolutely engaged to beſtow on our prayers and endeavours, *viz.* that practical *knowledge* here *of his truth*, his doctrines and precepts, his promiſes and threatenings, that hereafter we may attain *everlaſting life* and happineſs.

Theſe things done, it can only remain, that on departing from God's more immediate preſence in his church, we intreat for ourſelves and one another (as we do accordingly in the words of ſcripture *), the continual preſence of the Holy Trinity, wherever we go: that *grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, which will ſecure us *the love of God* the Father, and *the fellowſhip*, that is, the communication of the needful warnings and aſſiſtances *of the Holy Ghoſt*.

Now *what we* thus *faithfully aſk, may we effectually obtain, to the relief of our neceſſity, and the ſetting forth of God's glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.*

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

SER.

SERMON XCVI.

An Explanation and Defence of the Liturgy of the Church of England.

1 Cor. xiv. 15.

——*I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the Underſtanding alſo: I will ſing with the Spirit, and I will ſing with the Underſtanding alſo.*

THE liturgy of our church has now been explained to you, as far as the end of the morning prayer. The evening prayer hath nothing different from it; excepting the hymns, that follow the leſſons, and the two collects after that for the day.

The hymn after the firſt leſſon, called *Magnificat*, from the word with which it begins in the *Latin*, was uſed anciently by the weſtern church; and continues to be uſed by the Proteſtants abroad. It is the ſong of the bleſſed virgin, recorded by St. *Luke**, on the confirmation which ſhe received, at *Elizabeth's* houſe, of what the angel had told her, that ſhe ſhould become the mother of our Lord, by the operation of the Holy Ghoſt: and it expreſſes moſt naturally the tranſport, which on that occaſion ſhe muſt feel; but, like the hymn of *Zacharias*, in phraſes of the Old Teſtament, to be interpreted from the New; of which matter I have already ſpoken.

My ſoul doth magnify the Lord; doth acknowledge the infinite greatneſs of his power and mercy: *for he hath regarded the lowlineſs of his hand-maiden*; that is, the *low eſtate;* for ſo the original ſignifies, and ſo it is expreſſed in our bibles; not the humility of mind, which the holy virgin was too humble to

* Luke i. 46—55.

to aſcribe to herſelf. *From henceforth all generations ſhall call me bleſſed:* as we do accordingly, both by repeating this hymn, and in our common ſpeech. *For he, that is mighty, hath magnified me,* hath raiſed me to great honour: *and holy is his name;* his truth, his juſtice, his mercy, his concern for the goodneſs as well as happineſs of his creatures, are glorioufly manifeſted in this wonderful diſpenſation. *He hath ſhewed* in times paſt, and will as certainly now, as if it were done already, *ſtrength with his arm,* ſupernatural deeds performed by his power, for the erection of the kingdom of his Son: and hath often, and will again, *ſcatter* and defeat *the proud* oppoſers of it, by means of thoſe very *imaginations of their hearts,* in which they exult. *The mighty* amongſt the Jews and Heathen *ſhall be put down from their ſeat, and humble and meek* Chriſtians *exalted* in their ſtead. *They, that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs* *, ſhall be *filled with* ſpiritual *good things; and the rich,* that rely on the vain and falſe treaſures of their own wiſdom and merit, he will convict of being *poor, and blind, and naked* †, *and* ſo *ſend* them *empty away. He hath holpen his ſervant Iſrael,* all that by obeying him become his people, *as he promiſed to our forefathers, Abraham* the father of the faithful, *and his* true *ſeed;* thus *remembering his* covenant *mercy,* which ſhall laſt *for ever.* This is the triumph of the holy virgin: and every part of it ſhould be our own likewiſe. For God *hath regarded our low eſtate,* together with her's, and *magnified* us, and made us *bleſſed.* And we ſhould magnify and bleſs him continually for it.

Inſtead of this hymn, our prayer-book tells us, may be uſed, and in ſome places it frequently is, the 98th pſalm: in which we exhort one another to *ſing unto the Lord a new ſong;* words denoting, in the book of *Revelation* ‡, goſpel praiſes: and we foretell that *all lands* ſhall join in it, *with trumpets and ſhawms,* another inſtrument of wind-muſic, which in our bible is called a cornet: whence we may conclude, if it needed proof, that muſical inſtruments are lawful in Chriſtian worſhip. This future time of univerſal thankſgiving is deſcribed to be, when God ſhall *remember,* that is, ſhall give evidence that he hath never forgot *his mercy and truth towards*

* Matt. v. 6. † Rev. iii. 17. ‡ Rev. v. 9. xiv. 3.

wards the houſe of Iſrael, according to the fleſh; and not only they, but *all the ends of the world ſhall ſee his ſalvation*. No wonder, that even the irrational and inanimate parts of nature are called upon, by a lofty figure of ſpeech, to celebrate that glorious day: *the ſea* to *make a noiſe, and all that therein is; the floods to clap their hands, and the hills to be joyful together before the Lord:* partly for the preſent happineſs of that period, in which poſſibly the loweſt of God's works may ſhare; but chiefly for the approach of the next and concluding ſcene of Providence, when he ſhall *come* finally, *with righteouſneſs to judge the world, and the people with equity*.

After the ſecond leſſon, is appointed another hymn, uſed by the ancient church, in their private devotions at leaſt; and by the preſent *Greek* and foreign reformed, as well as ours and the *Romiſh*, in their public ones; and called from the *Latin* beginning of it, *Nunc dimittis*. It expreſſes the gratitude of good old *Simeon, a juſt man and devout*, as we read in St. *Luke**, *and waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael; to whom it was revealed, that he ſhould not die, till he had ſeen the Lord's Chriſt*. Accordingly, *he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jeſus, he took him up in his arms*, (image to yourſelves the ſcene, I beg you) *and bleſſed God, and ſaid: Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace*, that is, in comfort, *according to thy word; for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation, which thou haſt prepared* to ſet *before the face of all people*. And the following ſentence hath a ſtrong appearance of being deſigned by the Holy Ghoſt to intimate, (whether the ſpeaker of it perceived the deſign or not) that, contrary to the expected and natural order of things, Chriſt ſhould firſt *be a light to lighten the Gentiles*; then afterwards, *the glory of God's people Iſrael*. To perceive the fitneſs of *Simeon's* thankſgiving for our uſe, it needs only be remembered, and ever ſhould in repeating it, that we alſo *have ſeen the Lord's ſalvation*. For though we have not yet beheld our Saviour with our bodily eyes; to that of faith he is exhibited continually in the goſpel-hiſtory and ſacraments; we may meet him in his church, we may converſe with him in our private meditations. And this we ſhould think happineſs

* Luke ii. 25—32.

pineſs enough for us here, whatever elſe we want or ſuffer; and be always prepared, and always willing, to *bleſs God*, and *depart in peace*.

For this hymn we are allowed to uſe, and ſometimes do, the 67th pſalm: which is a prophetic prayer, that, through *the light of God's countenance*, his gracious illumination, *the way* of his providence and man's duty to him *may be known on earth, his ſaving health*, the means by which he heals and ſaves mens ſouls, *to all nations*: who are invited to *rejoice and be glad*, becauſe *he ſhall judge the folk righteouſly*; ſhall govern and reward the people of the world, (for ſo the word *folk* ſignifies, and was not a low expreſſion formerly), by the equitable and merciful rules of Chriſtianity. For *then*, on our doing this, *the earth ſhall bring forth her increaſe* more plentifully; *and God, even our own God, ſhall give us his bleſſing*, temporal and ſpiritual: *for godlineſs hath promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* *.

The former of the two collects, peculiar to evening prayers, is taken from a *Latin* form, at leaſt 1200 years old. It begs for the greateſt of bleſſings here below, that joyful peace of mind, which our Saviour promiſed his diſciples: *Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you* †. And ſince it cannot be obtained, but by *holy deſires, good* and prudent *counſels* for the execution of them, *and juſt actions*, done in conſequence of both; ſo we petition Him, *from whom all* theſe *proceed*, to grant it us by means of them; that *our hearts being ſet* by his grace *to keep his commandments*, and our ways *defended* by his providence *from the fear of our enemies*, we may find *the work of righteouſneſs, peace; and its effect, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever* ‡.

The latter collect, taken in part from an office of the *Greek* church, prays more particularly for the ſafety of the enſuing night: that God's favour may ſhine upon us, and *lighten our darkneſs*; that is, protects us, while we are unable to help ourſelves, or even to know our danger. The ſame phraſe is twice uſed in the book of Pſalms. *Unto the godly there ariſeth up light in darkneſs* §. And again, *The Lord ſhall make my darkneſs to be light* ||.

* 1 Tim. iv. 8. † John xiv. 27. ‡ Iſ. xxxii. 17.
§ Pſ. cxii. 4. || Pſ. xviii. 28.

Next to the morning and evening ſervice in our prayer-book ſtands *the litany*, or more earneſt ſupplication for averting God's judgments, and procuring his mercy. This earneſtneſs, it was thought, would be beſt excited and expreſſed by the people's interpoſing frequently, to repeat with their own mouths, the ſolemn form of *beſeeching* God to *deliver* and to *hear* them: in which, however, the miniſter is underſtood to join equally; as the congregation are in every particular ſpecified by him. Such litanies have been uſed in the church at leaſt 1400 years. And they were appointed firſt for *Wedneſdays* and *Fridays*, theſe being appropriated to penitence and humiliation, and for other faſts: but not long after for *Sundays* alſo; there being then the largeſt congregation, and moſt ſolemn worſhip; and our litany is further directed to be uſed at ſuch other times, as the ordinary ſhall think proper. Originally it was intended for a diſtinct ſervice; to come after the morning prayer, as the rubric of our liturgy ſtill directs, and before the office for the communion, at a proper diſtance of time from each; of which cuſtom a few churches preſerve ſtill, or did lately, ſome remains. But in the reſt, convenience or inclination hath prevailed to join them all three together: excepting that in ſome places there is a pſalm or anthem between the firſt and ſecond; and between the ſecond and third almoſt every where: beſides that the latter part of the morning prayer is, moſt of it, ordered to be omitted, when the litany is ſaid with it. But ſtill, by this cloſe conjunction, ſeveral things may appear improper repetitions; which, if the offices were ſeparate, would not. However, as it is, they who uſe extempore prayers in public, have ſmall right to reproach us on this head. For doth it not frequently happen, that, during one aſſembly of theirs, different miniſters praying ſucceſſively, or the ſame miniſter in ſeveral prayers, or perhaps in one only, ſhall fall into as many repetitions, as are in the different parts of our liturgy, or more? But be that as it will, to theſe laſt all perſons would eaſily be reconciled, if an interval were placed, in their minds at leaſt, between the ſervices; and they would conſider each, when it begins, as a new and independent one, juſt as if it were a freſh time of meeting together.

The

The litany of our church is not quite the ſame with any other: but differs very little from thoſe of the Lutherans in *Germany* and *Denmark*. It is larger than the *Greek*, but ſhorter than the *Roman*, which is half filled up with the names of ſaints invoked: whereas we invoke, firſt the three Perſons of the Holy Trinity, ſeparately and jointly; then in a more particular manner our Redeemer and Mediator, *to whom all power is given in heaven and earth* *.

Him we pray, that he would *not remember our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers*: which he may not only with juſtice permit to intercept from us (as they naturally often will) the bleſſings that we might elſe have inherited; but, if we have imitated wicked anceſtors, inſtead of taking warning by them, he may with equal juſtice puniſh us more ſeverely, not indeed than we deſerve, but than he would have done otherwiſe, to prevent the contagion from growing general and inveterate. Accordingly the ſecond commandment threatens *to viſit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children*: and the Pſalmiſt, according to the marginal, and perhaps righter tranſlation, prays as we do: *O remember not againſt us the iniquities of them that were before us* †.

The words, *and be not angry with us for ever*, beg, that the corrections which he doth ſee fit to inflict on us (for ſurely we all feel ſome), he would in mercy ſhorten. It is common language to ſpeak of afflictions, that laſt any time, as if they were endleſs. And the expoſtulation of *David* in the juſt quoted pſalm, *How long, O Lord, wilt thou be angry for ever* ‡? fully vindicates this petition, which was doubtleſs taken from thence.

Having, after this, beſought our bleſſed Lord to deliver us *from all evil and miſchief* in general, that is, from every thing bad and hurtful to us: we deſervedly rank *ſin* the foremoſt of ſuch things; and pray, firſt againſt the original cauſe of human wickedneſs, *the* ſecret *crafts and* open *aſſaults of the devil*, and its dreadful conſequences, *God's wrath and everlaſting damnation*; then againſt the principal tranſgreſſions of his laws by name, ſubjoining, *and all other deadly ſin*. By this we mean not to deny, that *the* juſt *wages* of every *ſin is*

* Matt. xxviii 18. † Pſ. lxxix. 8. ‡ Ver. 5.

death *: (though *there are*, as we learn from St. *John* †, *ſins not unto death*, that is comparatively) but only to pray againſt the peculiarly deadly with peculiar earneſtneſs. But ſtill, that we may leave out none, we petition laſtly to be delivered *from all the deceits of the world, the fleſh and the devil:* every iniquity of every kind and degree.

Then we proceed to deprecate the preſent ſufferings that our ſins have merited: and intreat our merciful Redeemer to preſerve us both from ſuch, as God's immediate hand inflicts; *lightening and tempeſt*, *plague* properly ſo called, *peſtilence*, or epidemic diſeaſes of any ſort, *famine and ſudden death;* and from ſuch alſo as mens unreaſonable paſſions produce; whether they be temporal, as *battle and murder;* or ſpiritual, as *falſe doctrine*, with its fruits, *hereſy and ſchiſm;* and what begets them all, *hardneſs of heart* in regard to God's commands, and *contempt of his word*, which contempt was never ſo widely ſpread and infectious, as at preſent.

We have indeed been blamed for praying againſt *ſudden death*. But the whole Chriſtian church hath done it from ancient time: and nature and reaſon, as well as religion, directs us to do it. Some, we own (and we wiſh they were many), may be always prepared thoroughly, in all reſpects, to die at any time. Yet even theſe may have cauſe to wiſh for warning of their death, on account of other perſons. Their example under the approach of it will uſually be very inſtructive; and their dying advice more than ordinarily beneficial to their friends, dependents, and relations: whom alſo their being taken away at once may ſhock, to a degree, for which they would be extremely ſorry, whatever they might otherwiſe chooſe for themſelves. But, even on their own account, Chriſtian humility would ſurely deſire a little ſpace for completer preparation. And they who profeſs to wiſh the contrary, are they ſo very certain, as this implies, that every part, both of their worldly affairs and their eternal concerns, is in the beſt condition to which it can be brought? Or may not poſſibly this appearing readineſs to die at any time ariſe, either from a ſecret dread to think of dying at all, or a ſecret unbelief, more or leſs, of what will follow after death?

* Rom. vi. 23. † 1 John v. 16, 17.

death? But whatever a few may imagine beſt for themſelves, juſtly or unjuſtly; ſome previous notice is undeniably beſt for the generality: and common prayers muſt be adapted to common caſes; always ſubmitting it to God, to make exceptions, where he ſhall think proper.

Having thus expreſſed from what things we deſire to be delivered, we earneſtly intreat our good and gracious Lord to ſhew this mercy to us, *by the myſtery of his holy incarnation*, and ſo on: that is, by the means, and for the ſake, of all that he hath done and ſuffered for us. The ſame manner of expreſſion is uſed, not only in common ſpeech on other occaſions, and in the liturgies of the ancient church on this, but in the ſcripture itſelf, where St. *Paul beſeecches* Chriſtians *by the mercies of God* *, *by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt* †, *by his coming and their gathering together to him* ‡; and *Daniel* intercedes with God thus, *According to all thy righteouſneſs, let thine anger be turned away: defer not for thine own ſake, O my God* §.

As we have need of protection and deliverance continually, ſo we proceed to beg for it, not only *in all time of our tribulation*, or adverſity; but *in all time of our wealth*, or proſperity: for when we ſeem in the moſt flouriſhing ſtate, we are often in the moſt danger of evil; and of ſin, the worſt evil. But as *the hour of death* is a ſeaſon of peculiar trial and terror; *and the day of judgment* will determine our lot for ever; we therefore intreat his more eſpecial grace and favour at both. The former indeed fixes our condition at the latter. But ſtill, as the beſt life and death obtain acquittal and reward, only through the pardoning goodneſs of our Judge; we have great cauſe to pray for ourſelves, as St. *Paul* did for *Oneſiphorus, that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day* ‖.

Having thus repreſented our own neceſſities, we now enlarge the ſubject of our devotions; and *make ſupplications*, as the apoſtle *exhorts, for all men* ¶: acknowledging that we are *ſinners*, and therefore unworthy; yet ſenſible that we are bound by his commands, and encouraged by his promiſes, to offer up ſuch requeſts. And here, after praying in general for

* Rom. xii. 1. † 2 Cor. x. 1. ‡ 2 Theſſ. ii. 1.
§ Dan. ix. 16, 19. ‖ 2 Tim. i. 18. ¶ 1 Tim. ii. 1.

for the Catholic church, we pray in particular for the head and principal members, both ſpiritual and temporal, of that part of it to which we belong, and for the whole of God's people of this land: then we extend our views further yet; and apply for bleſſings, religious and civil, to all other nations in common with our own; and to all ſorts of perſons amongſt them and ourſelves, according to their reſpective diſtreſſes and wants, of ſoul, body, or outward circumſtances: and, laſtly, conclude our interceſſions with imploring God's *mercy upon all men*, whatever their country, their religion, their ſins may be; but eſpecially on *our enemies*, *perſecutors*, *and ſlanderers*, whom we beg he would *forgive*, and in order to it, *turn their hearts* to a righter diſpoſition.

Againſt ſome of our requeſts for others, objections have been made. One is, that in beſeeching God *to ſuccour*, *help*, *and comfort all that are in danger*, we beſeech him to aſſiſt malefactors in eſcaping juſtice. But doth not every one underſtand it of ſuch *help and comfort*, as their caſe admits, conſiſtently with common good? Another is, that in praying him *to preſerve all that travel by land or by water*, we pray for the preſervation of robbers and pirates. But ſurely our intention is very plain: to beg that travellers, on their lawful occaſions, may be ſecured from robbers and pirates, amongſt other accidents: and if we add in our minds a further requeſt, that theſe wretches alſo may be preſerved, that is, from attempting any more injuſtice and violence, do we not act a very Chriſtian part? The ſame cavil hath been raiſed againſt our praying for God's *pity to all priſoners*, and *mercy upon all men:* words, which notoriouſly mean ſuch pity and mercy, as he ſhall judge not to be unfit. And writers and ſpeakers never ſcruple to omit limitations, which every reader or hearer, who is not perverſe, will of courſe ſupply.

After going through theſe petitions, we endeavour to excite our deſires of a gracious anſwer, to as much fervency as we can, by ſhort, but affectionate ſentences, uttered alternately, in a ſort of pious emulation, between the miniſter and people; and humbly importuning our Redeemer, as the eternal *Son* and ſpotleſs *Lamb of God*, the Lord's *Chriſt*, and the *Lord* of Chriſtians, that he would *grant us* his promiſed *peace*, which includes all bleſſings, and *have mercy upon us*, in beſtowing what

what we have aſked. For this purpoſe, it is acknowledged, we repeat ſeveral times the ſame words, with very ſmall variations. But ſuch *repetitions*, far from *vain* *, are moſt expreſſive ones: the natural, the almoſt conſtant language of earneſtneſs. Hence our Saviour, in his agony, reiterated the ſame words thrice †: and *David*, in a tranſport of thankſgiving, even to the ſix-and-twentieth time, as you may ſee in the 136th pſalm. And theſe very repetitions, which we uſe, are warranted by the ancient offices of the Chriſtian church.

Having thus enlivened our devotion, we proceed to offer up, what deſerves the moſt lively efforts of it, that perfect ſummary of all our petitions, the *Lord's Prayer:* which, though it occur ſeveral times in the ſeveral ſervices of the morning, occurs but once in this; and cannot eaſily be recited too often, provided it be with attention and affection.

Hitherto the litany hath dwelt on no ſingle ſubject of prayer long; but comprehended a ſurpriſing variety of the moſt needful articles in a very narrow compaſs. The remainder is of a different nature. It conſiders our ſtate here, very juſtly, as furniſhing perpetual ground of ſad reflection to every thoughtful mind: and applies itſelf wholly to expreſs to our heavenly Father the ſentiments required in ſuch a condition. The ſeemingly happieſt perſons in the world are very inconſiderate, if they do not diſcern a great deal to mourn over, in others and themſelves. Yet at the ſame time, the moſt afflicted are to blame, if they ſink under either what they ſee or feel. But the common duty of both is, *in every thing, by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, to make their requeſts known unto God* ‡. And therefore this part of the litany, though firſt introduced on occaſion of extraordinary diſtreſſes, lying heavy on *Chriſtendom* 1100 or 1200 years ago, will be too ſeaſonable in every age, till one of truer piety and more tranquillity ſhall come, than hath yet been known, or is likely ſoon to take place.

As the tranſgreſſions, by which we offend God, are the cauſe of our ſufferings, theſe our ſupplications begin very properly, with intreating, in ſcripture words, that on humbling ourſelves before him, he would *not deal with us after our*

* Matt. vi. 7. † Matt. xxvi. 44. ‡ Phil. iv. 6.

our ſins, neither reward us after our iniquities *. Next to this follows, as is repeated in the ſequel, an exhortation, *Let us pray:* which may appear ſomewhat ſtrange, conſidering that prayers immediately precede in both places. But they are ſhort ejaculations, not continued forms, like thoſe which follow. And beſides, this redoubled admonition, towards the concluſion of the office, will very uſefully remind thoſe, who may poſſibly be growing languid and inattentive, in how important a work they are engaged. Something there was of this kind, even in the Heathen devotions. But in the old liturgies of Chriſtian *Greece*, *Let us pray, Let us pray earneſtly, Let us pray more earneſtly*, often returns.

And the ſucceeding prayer, which is of ancient uſe in the weſtern church, deſerves our utmoſt earneſtneſs. It begs of Him, who, as the Pſalmiſt aſſures us, *will not deſpiſe a broken and a contrite heart* (which phraſe I have already explained to you), that *in all our troubles* he will both *aſſiſt us to make our prayers before him* as we ought, *and graciouſly hear us:* that ſo the deſigns of our enemies, viſible and inviſible, may be diſappointed, and we may feel and expreſs a juſt gratitude for our deliverance. To this the congregation anſwer, not as uſual, *Amen:* but in a ſhort form of ſcripture words †, more ſtrongly expreſſive of pious fervency. The miniſter inſtantly returns another ſcriptural addreſs ‡ to God; pleading with him, and ſuggeſting to us *the noble works* done by him for his church and people in general, and many good perſons in particular, which, if we have not ſeen with our eyes, *we have heard with our ears:* holy writ and other hiſtory hath related them; or *our fathers have declared them to us*, partly as performed *in their days*, partly *in the old time before them.* And ſince *his arm is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave; nor his ear become heavy, that it cannot hear* §; the congregation again petition him, in the ſame words as before; (only changing one for another, ſtill more pathetic,) that he would *ariſe, help, and deliver them*, for the *honour of his name:* not for our merits, but his own glorious perfections, and the inſtruction of his creatures; that we and all men may learn

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* Pſ. ciii. 10. † Numb. x. 35. Pſ. lxxix. 9.
‡ Pſ. xliv. 1. § Iſa. lix. 1.

to love, and praiſe, and ſerve him. Yet to this we are indiſpenſably bound, even while the painfulleſt view of our ſorrows and wants is before our eyes: and therefore in the midſt of our ſupplications, we proceed immediately to aſcribe that glory to the ſacred Three, which ever hath been, is, and will be their due, whether infinite wiſdom allots to us proſperity or adverſity. Nor is the mixture of doxologies with complaints leſs common in acts of worſhip than it is reaſonable. The book of *Pſalms* uſes it frequently: the old *Latin* and *Greek* liturgies uſe it on this very occaſion: and ſurely in our private devotions, even when moſt afflicted, we ſtill give praiſe to God.

But though we own it our duty to glorify him in the ſevereſt ſufferings, if it be his will that we ſhould undergo them; yet, conſcious of our weakneſs, we go on to beg his protection againſt them, or deliverance of us from them, in mutual ejaculations of the utmoſt warmth: not that moving expreſſions will any otherwiſe incline him to grant mercy, than as they fit us to receive it, by imprinting on us a juſt ſenſe of our dependence; which, if uſed with ſincerity, they naturally do.

Then we cloſe this part of the litany with a more continued form of addreſs to our merciful *Father*; compoſed originally above 1100 years ago; corrupted indeed afterwards, by intreating God to *turn from us* all *evils* for the ſake of the interceſſion of his ſaints; but reformed in our liturgy, not only by leaving out that addition, but by inſerting, for completer ſecurity, a new clauſe: *Grant, that in all our troubles, we may put our whole truſt and confidence in thy mercy.* And thus it is that we borrow from the church of *Rome*. By this prayer, ſo amended, we humbly confeſs our infirmities and unworthineſs: yet beg, that notwithſtanding both, we may, if God ſees it proper, eſcape the afflictions which we fear: but if not, that being ſtill aſſured of his goodneſs to us, we may, with *Job, though he ſlay us, truſt in him* *: and that for a proof of this, we may as faithfully do our duty under the heavieſt preſſures, as the higheſt exaltation; *and evermore ſerve him in holineſs and pureneſs of living, to his honour and*

* Job xiii. 15.

glory; ſaying with *Job* again, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil**? *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: bleſſed be the name of the Lord*†.

What remains of the litany is the ſame with the concluſion of the morning and evening prayer; and therefore needs no ſeparate explanation. May God give us grace to uſe theſe, and all our devotions, in ſo right a manner, that from praying to him amidſt the troubles and ſorrows of this world, we may be taken, in his good time, to praiſe him for ever amidſt the joys of the next, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

* Job ii. 10. † Job i. 21.

SER.

SERMON XCVII.

An Explanation and Defence of the Liturgy of the Church of England.

1 Cor. xiv. 15.

——I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the Underſtanding alſo: I will ſing with the Spirit, and I will ſing with the Underſtanding alſo:

ONCE more I intreat your attention to the ſubject, on which I have ſo often diſcourſed from theſe words. The part of it which remains is the communion ſervice. But as that ſervice is almoſt every where ſeparated, and very properly, from the preceding one, by the ſinging of a pſalm, I would firſt ſay a little concerning that much diſregarded branch of worſhip.

As ſinging is capable of expreſſing ſtrongly every ſtate, in which the mind can be, towards every object; ſo there never was perhaps any one nation upon earth, civilized or barbarous, that did not make this a part of the honour paid by them to the God whom they adored. We find in the Old Teſtament it was practiſed by the *Jews*, before their law was given, as well as after *. The book of *Pſalms* conſiſts wholly of religious ſongs: and directs the *ſaints of the Lord, to ſing unto him, and give thanks for a remembrance of his holineſs* †: to *ſing unto the honour of his name, and make his praiſe glorious* ‡: *to ſing praiſes unto our God, while we have our being* §. The prophets foretell, that, in the goſpel times, men *ſhall ſing for the majeſty of the Lord*: and, which brings the prediction home to us, *they ſhall cry aloud, and glorify God, in the iſles*

* Exod. xv. 1, &c. Pſ. xxx. ‡ Pſ. xvi. 1. § Pſ. cxlvi. 2.

iſles of the ſea *. Accordingly St. *Paul*, not only himſelf with *Silas*, even in priſon, *ſang praiſes unto God* †: but appoints, that all Chriſtians ſhould *ſpeak to themſelves, and admoniſh one another, in pſalms, and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs, making melody, with grace in their hearts, to the Lord* ‡. And St. *James* preſcribes, *Is any one merry?* in a joyful frame on account of bleſſings received (for the word *mirth* comprehended anciently the moſt ſerious kinds of gladneſs) *let him ſing pſalms* §.

In purſuance of theſe rules, the firſt Chriſtians made ſinging a conſtant part of their worſhip: as, beſides the eccleſiaſtical writers, even a Heathen informs us ‖. And the whole congregation joined in it. Afterwards indeed the ſingers by profeſſion, who had been prudently appointed to lead and direct them, by degrees uſurped the whole performance ¶. But at the reformation the people were reſtored to their rights: and it made a much quicker progreſs for the pleaſure and comfort which they found in this practice; a circumſtance that ought to endear it to conſiderate perſons not a little. And as the only way of ſinging known in common parochial churches, is by the metre pſalms, unleſs we join in that, we intirely omit this branch of our duty.

It is very true, the verſe tranſlation of the pſalms generally uſed, is void of ornament; and hath expreſſions often low and flat, ſometimes obſolete: and I wiſh a better were ſubſtituted in its place. But ſtill, in many other caſes, ancient ſolemn forms of words are thought venerable, when they are far from elegant: not to ſay, that the language of our forefathers, even where it may ſeem very uncouth at preſent, had in its time frequently full as much propriety and beauty as ours. And ſeveral words of it have been, for that reaſon, revived by ſome of our beſt modern authors. But at leaſt the matter, compriſed in the words of which I am ſpeaking, is ſo highly reſpectable, that the mind which is affected only by the phraſe, and not by the ſenſe, muſt be a light one indeed.

Again, it is true alſo, that the tunes to which theſe pſalms are ſung, are moſt of them plain and ſlow; and the voices of many in the aſſembly unharmonious, and apt to be ill managed.

* Iſa xxiv. 14, 15. † Acts xvi. 23, 24, 25. ‡ Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16.
§ James v. 13. ‖ Plin. l. x. Ep. 97. ¶ BINGHAM iii. 7, 2.

naged. But tunes, deſigned for the multitude to join in, who have never been regularly inſtructed, muſt be plain and ſlow, and ſuch as they have been accuſtomed to: for which purpoſe the number ſhould be moderate. Ours are many of them recommended, and as it were conſecrated, by long uſage. Confeſſors for the Proteſtant cauſe have compoſed them. Martyrs for it have yielded up their dying breath in them. And ſeveral of them are thought, by competent judges, no way deficient in real melody. Amongſt a variety of people, part of them with bad ears, and moſt of them with untaught voices, there will be ſome that had better totally abſtain; only attending to the ſenſe, as well as the ſound, of what is uttered by the reſt: and others that ſhould moderate themſelves to a prudent degree of lowneſs, till they have learnt how to exert themſelves more properly. But all who are, or can be qualified, and there are few who cannot, ſhould bear ſuch a part as they are able. It may be done, without in the leaſt diſordering the more ſkilful fingers, who perform the very uſeful office of raiſing and ſupporting the tune. This, in many congregations, is done by the organ, the charity children, or both. But then the organ ſhould expreſs the tunes plainly and diſtinctly, and make very moderate intervals between the lines; the children ſhould be taught to ſing in exact time and concert with it; and the whole congregation ſhould accompany them fervently, yet with prudence. Taking this care, though there ſhould ſtill happen to be ſome little diſcords, they would be intirely loſt in the general chorus: the effect of which would be noble and elevating, if we took rightly into our thoughts the whole of the matter, inſtead of cavilling at minute particulars.

Conſider the nature of a wild multitude, in its original ſavage ſtate, met together at the call of ſome vehement ungoverned paſſion; how alarming the concourſe; how frightful and horrid the confuſed and hideous cries of it muſt be. Then conſider the ſame multitude, ſoftened and cultivated by the gentle influences of religion, and unanimouſly aſſembling at ſtated ſeaſons, to ſing forth the praiſes of the wiſe and good Parent of all, and echo to each other the precepts of a rational, and mild, and beneficent life here, as the means of obtaining eternal felicity hereafter. Can there be a happier change of

ſcene,

ſcene, a ſweeter and more pleaſing view? And ſuppoſe the harmony made by them were ever ſo little better than *ſhouting unto God with the voice of triumph*, as the ſcripture expreſſes it, and *making a joyful noiſe unto the Rock of their Salvation* *: yet what worthy, and humane, and pious heart is there, that would not be charmed with the ſound, and zealouſly join in it? We are diſpoſed thus on other occaſions. Amongſt our anceſtors, who judged of propriety as diſcreetly as ourſelves (to ſay no more), the very higheſt joined humbly and cheerfully with the loweſt of their fellow Chriſtians, in the duty of pſalmody, however artleſsly performed. And I intreat you to reflect what it is, either to diſdain, or be aſhamed, or be too indolent, to lift up our voices to the honour of our Maker, when we come into his houſe profeſſedly to worſhip him, and he hath commanded that one part of his worſhip ſhall be this.

But if we will not employ our lips in the ſervice, we may ſtill fix our minds upon it; at leaſt we ſhould not hinder others from doing either. And particularly we ſhould abſtain from giving the bad example, and the offence, of indecently holding converſation at that time; for which there cannot ſurely be ſo preſſing an occaſion, but that it may very ſafely be deferred till after church, if not altogether omitted.

In the ſinging of pſalms, different perſons uſe different poſtures. The proſe pſalms, I believe, are, and ever have been, repeated by all perſons every where ſtanding. In the verſe pſalms we all ſtand at the doxology. And in what goes before, the reaſon for doing it is exactly the ſame, and a very ſtrong one; that the whole is ſung to the glory of God, and often directly addreſſed to God. Accordingly we read in the Old Teſtament, that not only the *Levites* were *to ſtand every morning to thank and praiſe the Lord, and likewiſe at even* †, but that when *they waited with inſtruments of muſic to praiſe the Lord, all Iſrael ſtood* ‡; and again, that they ſaid to the people, *ſtand up, and bleſs the Lord your God* §. We read likewiſe, that in a viſion of St. *John*, in the book of *Revelation*, *a great multitude, which no man could number, ſtood before the throne, and cried*

* Pſ. xlvii. 1. xcv. 1.
† 1 Chron. xxiii. 30.
‡ 2 Chron. vii. 6.
§ Neh. ix. 5.

cried with a loud voice, Salvation to our God *: and in another, that *they who had gotten the victory over the beaſt, ſtood and ſang the ſong of Moſes, and of the Lamb* †. Standing, therefore, as it is plainly the fitteſt poſture in itſelf, is the authoriſed one alſo: and were it more uncommon than it is, would be far from a diſhonourable ſingularity. But ſtill, as very many in moſt congregations, either have, by long habit, been prejudiced in favour of ſitting, or, though they diſapprove the cuſtom, feel a difficulty of quitting it, unleſs every one did; they ſhould not be cenſured for a practice by which they mean nothing amiſs; but kindly encouraged to an alteration in this point, which we may thus hope will gradually become general.

And now I go on to the third morning office, which follows the pſalm, and is called the *communion-ſervice*, and read at the Lord's table, where it can with convenience, becauſe the holy communion makes part of it; though a part unhappily, now for many centuries, too often left out in almoſt all churches, which it never was originally in any: but, however, the reſt is very proper to be uſed by itſelf. Anciently, as well as now, they who did not ſtay to receive the ſacrament, were allowed to join in the beginning of the office: and from the middle ages downwards, the beginning hath been uſed, even where there was no ſacrament, for a memorial, which might be uſeful, of the primitive practice.

The firſt thing we do in it, is repeating the Lord's Prayer; which peculiarly ſuits this moſt ſolemn act of Chriſtian worſhip. Then we proceed, in a very old and excellent collect, to beg of Him, *unto whom all hearts be open*, ſo *to cleanſe the thoughts of ours, by the inſpiration of his Holy Spirit*, by breathing into us, with laſting efficacy, good inclinations and purpoſes, *that we may*, as *perfectly* as our preſent ſtate admits, *love* him in our ſouls, and *magnify* him in our words and lives. Purity of intention is both in general requiſite for approaching God's altar, and more eſpecially for going through the next part of the office aright: in which, after hearing the ten commandments rehearſed to us, we pray God to *have mercy upon us*, and pardon us, ſo far as we have tranſgreſſed either

* Rev. vii. 9, 10. † Rev. xv. 2, 3.

either the letter or the ſpirit of them, as explained by our bleſſed Redeemer, *and incline our hearts to keep* each of them better for the future. It doth not appear that this form of devotion was ever uſed in any liturgy before our own. But ſurely, taking the commandments with the goſpel interpretation of them, it is a very inſtructive and edifying one. And they, who think the confeſſion in the morning prayer not particular enough, have ſufficient room here to ſupply that imagined defect.

Next follows a prayer for the king. The primitive Chriſtians, in every public office, preſented a ſupplication for their ſovereign. Now in this office, unleſs it were put in the beginning, few in proportion would join in it when the ſacrament is adminiſtered, conſidering how many return home without receiving. And therefore it is placed here, juſt after the ten commandments, of which the authority of the magiſtrate is one main ſupport, as they are of that in return: and we pray the Almighty, that, in *mercy to his church, he will ſo rule the king's heart*, whom, in the courſe of his providence, he hath *choſen* to reign over us, and to be his *ſervant* and *miniſter to us for good* *, *that he may, above all things, ſeek his glory*, by maintaining his laws above-mentioned: and will ſo *rule* our *hearts* likewiſe, and thoſe of *all his ſubjects, that we may faithfully and humbly obey him: in God*, that is, in the ſtrength of his grace, and in ſubordination, not contradiction to his ſupreme will; and *for God*, not only *for* fear of man's *wrath, but for conſcience ſake alſo* †.

Then we offer up the collect for the day, of which I have ſpoken already; and after it, read two portions of ſcripture, to which it hath frequently a reference. One of them is uſually taken from the epiſtles, the other always from the goſpels. The epiſtle hath been thus read certainly for 1300 years, but the goſpel much longer. And the very portions that we now uſe, were moſt of them uſed on the ſame days 1200 years ago, and perhaps a great deal earlier. The annual courſe of them, and of the collects prefixed to them, began then, as it doth now, not with the civil year, or the entrance of the ſun into this or that ſign; but from the *advent*, the

* Rom. xiii. 4. † Ver. 5.

the approach of the appearance of Chriſt, *the Sun of Righteouſneſs* *. And it was ſo contrived, that the former part, from his birth to his aſcenſion, ſhould repreſent to us the principal articles of his hiſtory; the latter, thoſe of our own duty.

At the reading of the goſpel, the people are directed to ſtand up, in honour of him whoſe life and words it relates. And there appears no time when they did otherwiſe; or when that acclamation, *Glory be to thee, O Lord*, was not made, which indeed at preſent is not preſcribed, though it was in the firſt edition of *Edward* the Sixth's liturgy, but omitted afterwards, probably by accident; for there could be no objection raiſed againſt it.

As in the morning prayer, ſo in the communion-ſervice, for the ſame reaſon, after reading the ſcripture, we recite the creed: only there we have that of the ancient *Latin* church, here that of the ancient *Greek*; made in the firſt general council, held at *Nice*, above 1400 years ago, and thence called *Nicene*; excepting that ſome ſmall additions were inſerted ſince, all of them, but one †, about 50 years after.

In this creed, we profeſs ourſelves *to believe in one Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, becauſe ſome had ſpoken of the human and divine nature of our Saviour, which they called Jeſus and Chriſt, as two perſons not united. The words, *Light of Light*, intimating, that his divine nature is from the Father, as light is from the ſun, or as one light, without diminution of itſelf, kindles another, were intended for ſome imperfect illuſtration (and doubtleſs a very imperfect one it is, and any other muſt be), of his myſterious generation. The words, *Lord, and Giver of Life*, aſcribed to the Spirit, are not to be joined as one ſingle attribute, but are taken from two different texts of ſcripture: in the one of which he is called, according to the marginal reading, *the Lord the Spirit* ‡; and ſaid in the other *to give life* §, that is, the ſpiritual life of grace. The phraſe, *who proceedeth from the Father and the Son*, may ſignify, either his deriving from the latter, as well as the former, his

* Mal. iv. 2.

† Conſiſting of the words, *and the Son*; which came in ſome hundreds of years after. See *Nichols*.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18. § Ver. 6.

eternal ſubſiſtence; or, ſince that hath been diſputed between the *Latin* and *Greek* church, his being ſent by both into the hearts of men, as the ſcripture plainly affirms he is *.

After the creed another pſalm is ſung: and then the miniſter, who is to preach, *moves the people*, by the direction of the 55th canon, *to join with him in* a ſhort form of *prayer*. This was more particularly needful in paſt ages, when the ſermons were commonly at a different hour from the liturgy, as they are ſtill at our univerſities. And at whatever hour they were, great ſtreſs was laid on the uſe of this prayer for ſome time after the reformation; becauſe, when that took place, an acknowledgment of the king's ſupremacy, which the *Papiſts* denied, was very prudently, as things then ſtood, inſerted into it. And hence it hath continued to our days, though it is frequently ſhortened into a collect and the Lord's Prayer, the reaſon for enlarging being now become leſs. The original manner of performing this part of the preacher's office was by *bidding*, that is, inviting and exhorting the people to pray for the ſeveral particulars mentioned by him; which they were underſtood to do, either ſilently in their minds, as they went along with him, or by comprehending them all in the Lord's Prayer at laſt. But, in proceſs of time, ſome imagined it better to put the whole into the ſhape of a direct addreſs: others followed their example, as thinking it a matter of indifference: but moſt have kept to the old way. And the intention being the ſame, neither cuſtom ſhould give offence.

The ſermon was anciently an explanation and improvement of the epiſtle and goſpel juſt read before, eſpecially the latter: but now, for a long time, a greater latitude hath been uſefully taken.

After the ſermon, one or more of the *ſentences*, or ſcripture injunctions of bounty and almſgiving, as alſo the *prayer for the whole ſtate of Chriſt's church*, are appointed to be read, *if there be no communion*, before the congregation be diſmiſſed: neither of theſe things being ever unſuitable. And *the firſt day of the week* is recommended in ſcripture for purpoſes of charity †, as well as ſet apart for *making ſupplications, and giving*

* John xiv. 26, xv. 26. xvi. 7. † 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

giving thanks for all men *. But they are both more peculiarly proper with a view to the communion; in which light I ſhall now conſider them.

When we commemorate our Saviour's dying love to us all, we ought ſurely to think of expreſſing our love to our brethren; which muſt be ſhewn by promoting both their ſpiritual good and their temporal. To the former belong thoſe ſentences, which require that they who are able ſhould contribute to the maintenance of a goſpel miniſtry, where it wants their help. And they require it ſtrongly, as you will perceive by reading them. For indeed we ſeldom or never read them to you, that we may not ſeem to plead our own cauſe; excepting in ſome few of our churches, where the primitive practice (needful in too many more), of giving oblations to the miniſter, as well as alms to the poor, at the ſacrament, is preſerved or reſtored. The reſt of the ſentences exhort to the latter duty, of relieving the ſick and needy. What is generally given for them on this occaſion, muſt be conſidered not as the whole, but a ſample and earneſt of your charity; I hope a ſmall one in compariſon of what you give at other times; and, I truſt, is every where faithfully applied as it ought, with moſt religious and prudent care.

But as there are few in proportion to whom we can do good with our ſubſtance, and many that are much above our alms, yet greatly need our prayers, we proceed to offer them up *for the whole ſtate of Chriſt's church militant*, that is, carrying on a warfare againſt the enemies of the ſoul *here on earth*: that all the members of it may not only have *the ſpirit*, the fervent deſire, *of truth, unity, and concord*, but may actually *agree in the truth of God's holy word, and live in unity and godly love*. Then we petition more eſpecially for thoſe, whoſe ſtations, as kings, magiſtrates, and clergy, or whoſe ſufferings of any kind require it moſt: and give thanks for thoſe who are got beyond the reach of ſufferings; begging, that we may *follow their example*, as far as it was a *good* one, and ſhare in their happineſs.

The two *exhortations* ordered to be uſed, one or other of them, *when warning of the communion is* given, are ſeldom

* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

uſed, where it returns too frequently and ſtatedly to need warning. However, they have a great deal in them that ought to be ſeriouſly weighed; but nothing that wants to be explained at preſent, unleſs it be the direction laid down, that they, who *cannot quiet their own conſciences*, as to their ſpiritual ſtate, and fitneſs for the ſacrament, ſhould *open their grief to ſome diſcreet and learned miniſter of God's word, that they may receive the benefit of abſolution*, if they appear intitled to it, *together with ghoſtly*, that is, ſpiritual *counſel*. Now here, you ſee, this private abſolution is not affirmed to be, as it is by the Papiſts, neceſſary for all perſons, but only adviſeable for ſome. It therefore is only a declaration of the miniſter's judgment, a fallible one indeed; but the proper and appointed one, that if the perſon's caſe be truly repreſented, he is pardoned and abſolved by our heavenly Father, who alone can forgive ſins. And ſuch credit only is due to this declaration, as in other affairs we allow to authoriſed profeſſors and practitioners of ſkill and probity, whoſe opinions we often think it prudent to aſk, and happy to have in our favour: and God forbid that we ſhould not give you ours, when we are aſked it, with as much fidelity, and as much ſecrecy, as any miniſters of any church whatever.

There is the leſs occaſion that I ſhould enlarge on this office, becauſe I have explained in my lectures on the church catechiſm, the principal points relating to the Lord's Supper. I have ſhewn you in particular, that the expreſſion of *eating and drinking damnation to ourſelves* (which is uſed by St. *Paul* in his firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians* *, and from thence taken into the exhortation at the communion), means only bringing upon ourſelves a condemnation to ſome puniſhment from God, without determining of what kind. For the verſes immediately following (which I ſhall preſently repeat to you), very clearly ſhow, that the word in the original, which is here tranſlated *damnation*, ought to have been rendered in this place, as it is in ſeveral others, *judgment*. Now *judgment* is a general term, that ſignifies any degree of correction or puniſhment, in this life or the next. That which had been incurred by thoſe unworthy receivers, to whom the apoſtle wrote,

* Ch. xi. 29.

wrote, was only correction in the preſent life. For undoubtedly he told them the worſt of their danger, and he tells them of nothing elſe. The very next words are: *For this cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep*, are dead. Then follows, what entirely clears up the matter: *If we would judge ourſelves, we ſhould not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world.* The puniſhment therefore of receiving unworthily, will either be extended to another world, or confined to this, according to the degree of the fault: and if we repent ſincerely and in time, it will be forgiven in both. When in the ſame exhortation we are required to *judge ourſelves* THEN, this by no means implies, that we need not do it before, but that we ſhould take care it be now perfected. And when it is ſaid, that we *muſt above all things give thanks to God*, the meaning is not that faith and repentance are leſs neceſſary; but that theſe being ſuppoſed to precede, the principal point in the act of communicating is a thankful remembrance of God's mercy, diſpoſing us to lay hold of it.

From this laſt exhortation, we proceed immediately to the firſt thing recommended in it, a penitent confeſſion of our ſins; which the ancient church made alſo on the ſame occaſion. When in this we ſay, that *the burthen of them is intolerable*, we mean not always that the ſorrow, which we that inſtant feel for them, is extreme: for though very ſincere, it may be imperfect in its degree; or though as perfect as the conſtitution of our mind and body admits, it may not be very paſſionate and afflicting; or though it were once ſo, it may now be moderated by a joyful ſenſe of God's mercy to us; but we mean, that the weight with which our guilt, if not removed, will finally ſit heavy on our ſouls, is unſpeakably greater than we ſhall be able to bear.

After this confeſſion, the miniſter, himſelf one of the ſinners who hath joined in it, agreeably to the duty of his office, aſſures the people, that *God hath promiſed forgiveneſs to all that turn to him* as they ought; and earneſtly prays that they may obtain it; adding expreſs authorities of ſcripture to confirm their faith and hope.

Then he exhorts them, thus comforted, to *lift up their hearts*, and *give thanks to God:* which words, with the anſwers,

ſwers, and the ſubſtance of all that follows conſtantly, as far as, *Glory be to thee, O Lord moſt high*, appear to have been uſed in the communion-ſervice 1500 years ago; and might probably deſcend from the apoſtolic times. Even the cuſtom of appropriating particular prefaces to the more conſiderable feſtivals, is 1200 years old, if not more.

And now, approaching nearer to the act of receiving, we again ſolemnly acknowledge our own unworthineſs, as all the old liturgies did, though not ſo fully: and pray, *that our ſinful bodies may be made clean by Chriſt's body, and our ſouls waſhed through his moſt precious blood:* which expreſſions have been cenſured, as if they implied, that each of theſe, at leaſt the latter of them (his blood) had ſome peculiar efficacy, of which the other was deſtitute. But this cannot be intended: becauſe very ſoon after, *the preſervation of our bodies and ſouls* alſo *unto everlaſting life*, is aſcribed ſeparately, both to his body and to his blood, as it is in ſcripture alſo *. Therefore the diſtinction made here, was only meant for ſome kind of elegance in ſpeech: and it much reſembles what St. *Clement* the *Roman*, whom St. *Paul* intitles his *fellow-labourer* †, hath ſaid in his epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, that Chriſt *gave his fleſh for our fleſh, and his ſoul for our ſouls* ‡.

After this follows the prayer of conſecration, or ſetting apart the bread and wine to the ſacred purpoſe in which they are about to be employed. A prayer hath been uſed for that end, at leaſt 1600 years. And the mention which ours makes of the inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, from the words, *who in the ſame night that he was betrayed*, to the concluſion, is in every old liturgy in the world. The *Romaniſts* have put into their prayer of conſecration, names of ſaints, and commemorations of the dead, which we have thrown out. And indeed we have left nothing that ſo much as needs explaining; unleſs it may be uſeful to obſerve to you, that our Saviour's *one oblation of himſelf* is oppoſed to the various kinds of oblations under the law; and, *once offered*, to the continual repetition of them; though probably a further view was to intimate, that he is not, as the Papiſts pretend, really ſacrificed anew in this holy ordinance.

The

* Heb. x. 10, 19. † Phil. iv. 3. ‡ Sect. 49.

The firſt part of the words which the miniſter ſpeaks at delivering the elements, is very ancient: the reſt is added by our church; and the whole is unexceptionable. The poſture of kneeling which we uſe, when we receive, is a very proper one. Some indeed think, that the apoſtles received in the poſture which they uſed at meals, and that we ought to imitate them in this. Now, if ſo, to imitate them ſtrictly, we muſt not ſit (as theſe perſons do) but lie all along; for ſo did the apoſtles at table. But indeed we may rather ſuppoſe, that when our Saviour bleſſed the bread and wine, this being an addreſs to God, both he and they were in ſome poſture of adoration: and that they changed it before receiving, is not likely, conſidering how different that was from a common meal. Nor does it appear, that any part of the Chriſtian church, till of late years, ever uſed any other poſture than that of kneeling or ſtanding; by each of which they meant to ſignify worſhip. We uſe the former: but with an expreſs declaration inſerted in all our prayer-books, that *no adoration is hereby intended, or ought to be done, either to the ſacramental bread and wine (for that were idolatry, to be abhorred of all Chriſtians), or to any corporal preſence of Chriſt's natural fleſh and blood; for they are in heaven, and not here* *. We kneel therefore only to adore the inviſible God; and to be in a fit poſture for thoſe prayers and praiſes which can never be more properly offered up to him. And why any perſons ſhould prefer a different poſture, we cannot ſee.

Having communicated, we again repeat, after a long interval, the Lord's Prayer. For ſince, *to as many as* truly *receive him, he gives power to become the ſons of God* †; we may hope we have now ſtrengthened our title to apply, under that name, to *Our Father which is in heaven, &c.*

Then we *intirely*, that is, with our whole hearts, *deſire* him to *accept this our ſacrifice*, or ſervice, *of praiſe and thankſgiving*, which we have offered up to him: begging leave, at the ſame time, to *offer up ourſelves, body and ſoul*, as dedicated to his will; which is the great end of all our devotions; yet never mentioned in the *Romiſh* maſs-book. We pray alſo once more for the whole church; and laſtly for our fellow-communicants,

* Rubric after Communion. † John i. 12.

munícants, as well as ourſelves, that we may be *fulfilled*, that is, filled full, and, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, *abundantly ſatisfied* *, *with God's grace and benediction.*

After this, as our bleſſed Lord ſung an hymn † with his diſciples after the paſſover (in imitation of whom the whole Chriſtian church hath uſed one in commemorating *Our Paſſover, ſacrificed for us* ‡), we uſe one likewiſe, as ancient, in ſubſtance, as the fourth century at leaſt. It were better, indeed, that we ſung it; if there did not, alas, often want numbers, and generally ſkill. The beginning of it is the ſong of the holy angels in St. *Luke:* on which foundation we proceed to *glorify* God, and *give thanks to him for his great glory;* meaning, that of his goodneſs, wiſdom and power, diſplayed in the work of our redemption: fervently beſeeching *the Son and Lamb of God*, that his ſufferings to *take away the ſins of the world*, and his *ſitting at the right hand of the Majeſty on High* §, may bring down *mercy upon us:* and acknowledging, that we are all impure, *He only is holy;* men and angels are ſervants, *He only is the Lord; He only with the Holy Ghoſt*, united to the *Father in glory* unſpeakable, is *Moſt High* above all.

To this act of worſhip we ſubjoin (drawing now to a concluſion), one or more of theſe brief, but comprehenſive collects, which are provided for that purpoſe. In the firſt of them, ſome have objected againſt the phraſe, *Chances of this mortal life*, as implying ſomewhat irreligious. But our Saviour hath not ſcrupled to ſay, *And by chance there came down a certain prieſt* ‖. Again in the fourth, which is alſo frequently uſed before ſermon, ſome have ſtumbled at the expreſſion, *Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings:* becauſe preventing moſt commonly ſignifies hindering. But the original meaning, and the true one here is, Go before us: which may indeed be either to further us by opening the way, or to obſtruct us by ſtopping it. But ſurely it can no more be doubted which we intend, than what *David* intended, when he ſaid, *Thou ſhalt prevent him with the bleſſings of goodneſs* ¶; and again, *The God of my mercy ſhall prevent me* **. The others, I think, have no difficulties.

What

* Pſ. xxxvi. 8. † Matt. xxvi. 30. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 7. § Heb. i. 3.
‖ Luke x. 31. ¶ Pſ. xxi. 3. ** Pſ. lix. 10.

What remains is the ſolemn and affectionate form of diſmiſſion; moſt of which is taken from the words of holy writ. The miniſter of Chriſt in pronoucing it, prays, that *the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding*, that inward ſenſe of our Maker's goodneſs to us, which even now is delightful, beyond the conception of thoſe who have not experienced it; and ſhall hereafter be ſo heightened, as vaſtly to exceed the preſent conceptions of the beſt of us; *may keep our hearts and minds* *, our judgments and affections, *in the knowledge and love of God and his Chriſt*: and that every *bleſſing* of the Holy Trinity may be diſtributed *amongſt us, and remain with us always*. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for the ſake, &c.

* Phil. iv. 7.

SERMON XCVIII.

The Sacred Scriptures the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.

1 Pet. v. 12.

——Exhorting and teſtifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand.

THE happineſs of all creatures depends entirely on their obedience to his will whoſe ſovereign power created and rules the world. Now the will of God is made known to us in part by natural reaſon; and they who have no other law, ſhall be judged by that alone. But as reaſon was unable to teach mankind a great number of things very important to be known, and, in fact, did teach moſt of them but a ſmall part of what it might have done, God was mercifully pleaſed to ſuperadd the light of revelation to it, and place us under the conduct of both jointly. Such an additional proviſion, it might have been hoped, had cleared up all doubts; but partly the weakneſs, partly the wickedneſs of men, hath turned even this light into darkneſs, and made it multiply diſputes inſtead of ending them. Still we have no reaſon to be diſcouraged; for every upright and conſiderate perſon, may, after all, with due care, very eaſily ſee his way before him clearly enough to walk in it. But we have great reaſon to uſe this care, and make ſuch enquiry amidſt the different paths which different perſons point out to us, as will give us cauſe to be ſatisfied we chooſe the right. Now of all the different opinions which have riſen concerning the Chriſtian religion, there have been few ſo remarkable as that which divides this part of the world into *Popiſh* and *Proteſtant*. Thoſe

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of the former communion, it ſeems, think us of the latter quite out of the way to ſalvation, and accordingly are unwearied in perſuading, as they have opportunity, the members of our church, eſpecially the lower and more ignorant part of them, to quit it for theirs. The neceſſity of doing this, they inſiſt upon ſometimes with ſo much plauſibility, and always with ſo much confidence, that I hope you will not think a few diſcourſes ill employed on a ſubject of ſuch very great importance, both to our private ſatisfaction and public ſecurity, in refuting the arguments they uſually bring againſt us, and *teſtifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand.* To proceed regularly in this matter, I ſhall

I. Inquire what is the rule of Chriſtian faith and life: and

II. Examine by this rule the peculiar doctrines and practices of the *Romiſh* church.

I. I ſhall inquire what is the rule of Chriſtian faith and life: from whence we are to learn what things our religion requires as neceſſary, and what it forbids as unlawful: for, if we do the one, and avoid the other, we are undoubtedly ſafe. Now, as Jeſus Chriſt is the ſole *author of our faith* *, thoſe things, and thoſe alone, which he taught himſelf, and commiſſioned his diſciples to teach, are parts of our faith. What his doctrine was we find in no leſs than four accounts of his life and preaching given in the goſpels. To what belief his diſciples converted men, we find in the Acts. What they taught men after their converſion, we read in the epiſtles. Theſe ſeveral books, which make up the New Teſtament, all Chriſtians allow to contain an original and undoubtedly true account of our religion. The only poſſible queſtion is, whether they contain a full and clear account? Now ſuch a one they, without queſtion, intended to give, for what could induce them deſignedly to give any other? Beſides, St. *Luke*, in the very beginning of his goſpel, tells us, that *having a perfect underſtanding of thoſe things which were believed amongſt Chriſtians, he had taken in hand to ſet forth a declaration of them*, that thoſe he wrote to *might know the certainty of what they had been inſtructed in.* And St. *John*, in the concluſion

* Heb. xii. 2.

of his, tells us, that though our Saviour *did*, and doubtleſs ſaid alſo, *many things that were not written in that book, yet theſe*, ſays he, *are written that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name* *. This being then their intention, can we poſſibly think they failed of it? Two of the evangeliſts at leaſt were conſtantly preſent at our Saviour's diſcourſes, the other two heard them either from him, or his immediate followers, and they had the promiſe of his Spirit *to bring all things to their remembrance whatſoever he had ſaid unto them* †. Could they after all forget any part of this that was material and neceſſary? That any of them ſhould do ſo is very ſtrange, much more that they all ſhould. That St. *Luke*, the companion of the apoſtles, and the writer of their acts, that he too, in relating what they taught their converts, ſhould unhappily omit any thing eſſential, ſtill adds to the wonder: and that no one of the many epiſtles written to inſtruct the churches in their faith and duty, ſhould ſupply this defect, is beyond all belief.

But ſuppoſing the ſcripture ever ſo perfect in itſelf, yet the church of *Rome* objects that it is not clear to us: even to the learned many things are hard to be underſtood, which therefore to the unlearned muſt be impoſſible. Nay, ſometimes they tell us not one ſentence of it hath a meaning, which by our own private judgment we can be certain of. But ſurely the apoſtles were not worſe writers *with* a divine aſſiſtance, than others commonly are *without* it. What they ſpoke and preached was plain, elſe they ſpoke to no purpoſe: and why ſhould not the ſame things be as plain when they were written down? Some paſſages indeed might to ſome perſons be difficult even at firſt, and more are doubtleſs become ſo by length of time. But that the main of the New Teſtament is intelligible enough, cannot be with any modeſty denied. And for the reſt, what at firſt ſight is difficult, may with due conſideration of our own, and help of others, be made eaſy; what is obſcurely expreſſed in one place, may be clearly expreſſed in another; and what is clearly expreſſed in no place, we may ſafely, for that very reaſon, conclude it is not neceſſary for us to underſtand or believe.

But

* John xx. 30, 31. † John xiv. 26.

But allowing the ſcriptures to have been at firſt ſufficiently intelligible, how do we know they are come down to us uncorrupted? I anſwer, by all the ſame arguments which prove the incorruptneſs of any other ancient book in the world, and by this argument farther, that theſe books having many more copies of them, being much wider diſperſed, and much more carefully read, and warmly diſputed about, than any other whatever; it is in proportion more incredible that either chance or deſign ſhould alter them, in any thing conſiderable, without diſcovery from ſome quarter, even were no particular providence to watch over writings ſo worthy of its care. And accordingly, in fact, amidſt all the various readings which ſuch a number of copies muſt produce, there is not one that affects the leaſt article of our religion. But if ever ſo faithfully preſerved, ſtill how ſhall the unlearned know when they are faithfully tranſlated? Why, moſt paſſages all parties agree in, and on thoſe they diſagree about, common ſenſe, compariſon of other texts, conſideration of what goes before and after, and conſulting, as opportunity offers, judicious and honeſt perſons of different perſuaſions, will enable any perſon to paſs a ſufficient judgment, ſo far as he is concerned to judge, which is right and which is wrong, which is clear and which is doubtful. Indeed there is in general but little danger of any groſs impoſitions upon men being attempted, much leſs ſucceeding, for any continuance, in a land of knowledge and freedom, whatever may be, or hath been, under Popiſh tyranny and darkneſs. Since therefore the ſcriptures contain a full and clear account of Chriſtianity, written by the very apoſtles and firſt diſciples of our Lord himſelf, and honeſtly delivered down into our hands, we have plainly ſuch a rule for our faith as all men in all caſes are ever ſatisfied with; nor have we any need to look farther. And yet the farther we do look into other pretended rules, the better we ſhall be ſatisfied with that we have already. For, let what will be ſaid againſt ſcripture, as not being a ſufficient rule, it muſt be a ſufficient one, unleſs there be ſome other; and, upon a fair examination, it will evidently appear there is no other. The *Romaniſts* indeed tell us of one which they ſpeak of in very high terms, and that is the traditionary doctrine of what they call the Catholic Church. The apoſtles, they ſay, inſtructed

inſtructed their converts very diligently in every article of faith. Thoſe converts again, knowing it to be their indiſpenſable duty, could not fail to inſtruct, with the ſame diligence, miniſters their flocks, parents their children, every Chriſtian his neighbour. And thus, by a continued ſucceſſion of teaching, all the doctrines of religion are handed down in their church, they tell us, uncorrupted to this day. Whoever either added, omitted, or changed any thing, muſt, they think, by every one round him, be immediately charged with a miſtake; and, if he perſiſted in it, convicted of a hereſy, whilſt the reſt were confirmed in the ancient truth. And therefore to hold what the church holds, is a rule that can never miſlead us. Now it muſt be owned indeed, that our Saviour delivered his doctrine to the apoſtles, and they to all the world by word of mouth; and this way of delivering at firſt was ſufficient; and therefore St. *Paul* exhorts the *Theſſalonians, to hold faſt the traditions he had taught them, whether by word or by letter* *. But then, in the nature of things, how long could this laſt? Suppoſe but the eaſieſt common ſtory were to be told from one perſon to another, without being written down, for only 100 or 200 years, and let each perſon, as he received it, have ever ſo ſtrict a charge to tell it in the ſame manner; yet, long before the end of that time, what ſecurity could we poſſibly have that it was true at firſt, and unaltered ſtill? And you cannot but ſee there is much leſs ſecurity, that a conſiderable number of doctrines, eſpecially ſuch as compoſe the *Popiſh* creed, ſhould be brought down ſafe for 1700 years together, through ſo many millions of hands, that were all liable, through ignorance, forgetfulneſs, and ſuperſtition, to miſtake them, or, through knavery and deſign, to alter them. But it will be ſaid, in a caſe of ſuch importance as religion, men would be more careful in delivering truth than in others. Undoubtedly they ought; but who can be ſecure that they would? It is of equal importance to be careful in practiſing it too; yet we all know how this hath been neglected in the world; and therefore have reaſon to think the other hath been no leſs ſo. But whoever made the firſt change, they ſay, muſt have been immediately diſcovered.

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 15.

diſcovered. Now, ſo far from this, that perſons make changes in what they relate, without diſcovering it themſelves; alterations come in by inſenſible degrees: one man leaves out, or varies, or adds one little circumſtance; the next, another; till it grow imperceptibly into a different thing. In one age a doctrine is delivered as a probable opinion; the following age ſpeaks of it as certain truth; and the third advances it into an article of faith. Perhaps an oppoſition riſes upon this, as many have done: ſome have ſaid ſuch a doctrine *was* delivered to them, others that it was not: and who can tell whether at laſt the right ſide or the wrong have prevailed? Only this is certain, that whichſoever prevails, though by a ſmall majority at firſt, will uſe all means of art and power to make it appear an univerſal conſent at laſt, and then plead uninterrupted tradition. But though ſuch things as theſe may poſſibly be done in almoſt any age, yet they are eaſy to be done in ſuch ages, as were five or ſix of thoſe, that preceded the reformation; when, by the confeſſion of their own hiſtorians, both clergy and laity were ſo univerſally and ſo monſtrouſly ignorant and vicious, that nothing was too bad for them to do, or too abſurd for them to believe. But ſtill they tell us, we Proteſtants receive it upon the authority of tradition, that ſcripture is the word of God: and why can we not as well receive other things upon the ſame authority? I anſwer, we receive ſcripture by no means upon the authority of tradition merely; much leſs the tradition of their preſent church; but partly on account of its own reaſonableneſs, and the characters of divine wiſdom in it; partly from the teſtimony which one part of it bears to the other; and laſtly, upon the written evidence given us, chiefly indeed by the earlieſt Chriſtians, but in ſome meaſure alſo by Jews and Heathens themſelves, that the authors of theſe books were the diſciples of our Lord, and the things ſaid by them true. But then to tell us, that becauſe we receive ſcripture upon this evidence, we muſt therefore receive a long liſt of doctrines upon mere tradition, after 17 ages, is to affirm that the memory of things may be as well preſerved for ever, by general rumour and hearſay, as by authentic records. But here they plead, that the tradition which they depend on, is not altogether unwritten, but partly recorded by the ancient fathers of the church. To this

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we anſwer, that we acknowledge truly ancient writers, in matters where they all agree, to be a very valuable evidence of the faith, though at the ſame time a fallible one. And we can prove undeniably, that theſe writers, in proportion as they lived near the days of the apoſtles, were of our faith, not theirs. But as this is a proof in our favour, that few perſons are capable of entering into, ſo we have happily a much ſhorter. For if antiquity be an argument, the greater the antiquity, the ſtronger the argument: and therefore the authority of the Bible, for this, as well as many other reaſons, is the ſtrongeſt of all. An original account is always to be depended on in the firſt place. Such others, as come a little after, in point of time, may be of conſiderable uſe to illuſtrate and confirm the former; but, wherever they appear to contradict it, muſt be rejected without ſcruple. And thoſe which come a great deal after, ſuch as the church of *Rome* chiefly depends on, deſerve little or no credit. The Spirit of God therefore, ſeeing the need there would be of it, inſpired the apoſtles and evangeliſts to deliver a full and clear rule of faith, to all poſterity, in the New Teſtament: certainly not that this might be interpreted afterwards by tradition into whatever ſenſe men pleaſed (for then tradition alone had done as well or better without it), but that tradition, as often as it went wrong, might be rectified by this. Had not Chriſtianity been committed in the earlieſt ages to writing, long before this time, in all probability, there had been ſcarce one doctrine of it left, which we could have been ſecure was genuine. And though tradition hath doubtleſs been preſerved, by having ſome regard to ſcripture, from degenerating and varying near ſo much as it would elſe, yet, for want of having a ſufficient regard to it, firſt needleſs, then uncertain, then falſe and pernicious, articles of belief have crept in among Chriſtians; the very ſteps of whoſe entry, for the moſt part, we can trace. The faith of the firſt ages changed by little and little every age after, and ſtill for the worſe; till at length the church of *Rome*, about 200 years ago, at the council of *Trent*, when they were called upon to reform theſe abuſes, moſt ſhamefully choſe to eſtabliſh them under the venerable name of primitive tradition, and condemn all who will not receive them with the ſame regard as ſcripture itſelf. Juſt

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as in our Saviour's time it was among the *Jews*, who aſked, *why walk not thy diſciples according to the tradition of the elders? And he ſaid unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition* *. And juſt as St. *Paul* had foretold it would happen among Chriſtians. *Beware, leſt any man ſpoil you through vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and not after Chriſt* †. But here they reply, that, let this paſſage be deſigned againſt whom it will, it cannot poſſibly fall on them. For, however uncertain tradition might become of itſelf in proceſs of time, and however difficult it may be for private perſons to judge of doctrines by it, yet the judgment of the catholic church, in theſe points, is infallible, and theirs is that catholic church. Now, that the church is infallible, they ſometimes attempt to prove from reaſon. Making it ſo was the only way to end diſputes, and therefore God being wiſe and good, *muſt* have made it ſo. But certainly a much more effectual way of preventing diſputes and errors, had been to have made every ſingle man infallible; and yet God hath not done this. It might therefore be more modeſt for them to let him ſhew his wiſdom and goodneſs in what way he pleaſes. The *Jewiſh* church, we know, was not infallible; for they denied their Saviour, and it was by following tradition that they came to do it. How then does it appear that the Chriſtian muſt be more infallible? Why, they have texts of ſcripture to prove this. But if, as they commonly tell us, the ſcripture can neither be proved nor underſtood but by the infallible authority of the church, how can the infallible authority of the church be proved or underſtood but by ſcripture? However, let us hear theſe texts. Our Saviour told his apoſtles, that the Comforter *ſhould come, and lead them into all truth* ‡. But perhaps this was ſaid only to the apoſtles: and, had it been ſaid to them and their ſucceſſors, or, which is ſtill a different thing, to the whole church; yet ſo St. *John* § tells all believers *they have an unction from the holy one, and know all things*; that is, things neceſſary: not that they were not capable of miſtaking, but that, with due care, they might avoid it if they would. Again he promiſed his diſciples, that *he would be*

* Mark vii. 5, 9. † Col. ii. 8. ‡ John xvi. 13. § 1 John ii. 20.

with them to the end of the world *. And ſo he hath promiſed every ſingle Chriſtian to be *with them, and dwell with them* †: yet this does not hinder but they may both miſunderſtand, and even renounce Chriſtianity, if they pleaſe. But he declares alſo, that *the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt the church* ‡. But *the gates of hell*, or, as it might be tranſlated, of the inviſible world, mean nothing elſe than the power of death, *i. e.* the terror of perſecution, as the learned well know. And it can never follow, that becauſe perſecution ſhall not deſtroy the church, error ſhall not corrupt it. Or were this expreſſion, the *gates of hell*, to comprehend error, it muſt at leaſt equally comprehend ſin. And therefore, as this promiſe does not hinder the church univerſal from being more or leſs defiled by ſin, ſo neither from being deformed by error. And the moſt our Saviour meant to promiſe, is, that neither ſhall totally aboliſh, though, through the faults of men, both may greatly pollute it. They plead farther, that St. *Paul* ſays, the *church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth* §: but they know at the ſame time, that this paſſage of St. *Paul* is fairly capable of two other tranſlations, either of which turns it to a different ſenſe. Or were this the only ſenſe, we acknowledge the church was then, and ought always to be, and in ſome meaſure always is, a pillar and ſupport of truth; and ſo in his proportion is every believer: and therefore of every ſingle good Chriſtian our Saviour ſays, in the *Revelation* ‖, *I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.* But then it does not follow from hence, that any one Chriſtian, or the majority of Chriſtians, ſo ſupport the truth, as that they do, and ever will, profeſs it all, without any mixture of error; and unleſs this be done, there is no infallibility. But they argue farther, that our Saviour directs ¶, *If a man neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen man and a Publican.* But what is he there ſpeaking of? Let us read the context. *If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone. If he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more. If he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. If he neglect to hear the church, let*

* Matt. xxviii. 20. † 2 Cor. vi. 16. ‡ Matt. xvi. 18.
§ 1 Tim. iii. 15. ‖ Rev. iii. 12. ¶ Matt. xviii. 17.

let him be unto thee as a Heathen man and a Publican. That is, if a man have done you an injury, firſt admoniſh him privately of it. If that avail not, tell the church: not the univerſal church ſure throughout all the world, but the particular one you both belong to. And if he will not reform upon their reproof, look on him no longer as a true Chriſtian, but an ill man. Here therefore is not one word ſaid about diſobeying the determination of the catholic church concerning a diſputed doctrine; but about ſlighting the admonition of a particular church concerning a known ſin; and particular churches are owned to be fallible.

Again, they ſay it is an article of our creed, that we *believe in the catholic church.* But then they know the meaning of this is not that we believe whatever this church, or any who pleaſe to call themſelves ſo, ſhall at any time aſſert. But, as believing in the reſurrection of the body, is only believing that ſuch a reſurrection ſhall be; ſo believing in the catholic church, is only believing that ſuch a church is: that Chriſt hath united his followers into one regular ſociety or body, of which himſelf is the head: which ſociety or church is therefore called catholic or univerſal, becauſe it conſiſts of all nations; whereas the *Jewiſh* church was not catholic, but particular, conſiſting only of one nation. But whether this church be infallible or not, the creed ſays nothing. They that can lay a ſtreſs on ſuch wretched arguments as theſe, how would they have triumphed, had the ſame things been ſaid of their church, that are ſaid of the *Jewiſh* church? *If there ariſe a matter too hard for thee in judgment*, ſays *Moſes*, *thou ſhalt come unto the Prieſts and the Levites, that ſhall be in thoſe days, and thou ſhalt obſerve to do according to all that they ſhall inform thee; thou ſhalt not decline from the ſentence that they ſhall ſhew thee, to the right hand nor to the left**; *for by their words ſhall every controverſy be tried*†. *The Scribes and Phariſees*, ſays our Saviour, *ſit in Moſes' ſeat. All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do* ‡. Now if theſe very ſtrong expreſſions did not prove that church infallible (as certainly they do not, for then Chriſtianity, which they rejected, would not be true), how can much

* Deut. xvii. 8, &c. † Deut. xxi. 5. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 3.

weaker expreſſions prove any other to be ſo? But they who will needs have the church to be infallible, and the rule of our faith inſtead of ſcripture, what part of it do they make the infallibility reſide in? For unleſs that be clearly known, we are never the better for it; but inſtead of the ſame rule of faith, every different opinion about this matter will produce a different rule of faith. And it is a matter in which the opinions of the *Romaniſts* differ greatly. Many of them ſay the Pope is infallible, and he himſelf claims to be ſo. But then ſome think he is ſo in matters of faith only, ſome in matters of fact too. In moſt Popiſh countries it would be looked upon as hereſy to deny him this prerogative, in others as great wickedneſs to aſcribe it to him. For a large part of them ſay nothing is infallible under a general council regularly called. But then they have ſo many different opinions about what makes a council general, and what call of one is regular, that ſome of them reckon at leaſt eighteen general councils, and ſome at moſt but ſeven or eight; and indeed they might very juſtly queſtion whether, ſtrictly ſpeaking, there was ever ſuch a one in the world. But farther: which of the decrees and canons of theſe councils, amongſt the infinite forgeries there have been, are genuine, and which not; Here again is an endleſs controverſy; and another as endleſs, what the meaning of ſome of the moſt important ones of them is. In conſequence of this they differ and diſpute, and have done for ages (as united as they would ſeem to be), not only about ſuch ſilly queſtions, as whether the virgin *Mary* was conceived in original ſin or not (and yet about this they were calling one another heretics for 300 years, and their general councils, with all their infallibility, have not dared to determine the matter to this day), but they quarrel equally about things of the greateſt moment. To give but one inſtance of many: whether a king may, for hereſy and diſobedience to the church, be depoſed, and his ſubjects diſcharged of their allegiance, is a queſtion of as much weight as can well be put. The Popes, and great part of their church, for 600 years, have held they might, and have practiſed accordingly, as moſt nations in their turns have felt. But what tradition hath taught, and general councils have decreed on this point, is ſo various and contradictory, that it would take a man's

life

life almoſt to inquire into it. So that ſome *Popiſh* writers ſpeak of the affirmative of this queſtion as an article of faith, and ſome as a moſt impious error. One or the other muſt be impious undoubtedly. Which then are the heretics? and what is their infallibility good for, that either cannot, or will not, decide queſtions of ſuch importance to human ſociety as this? But to proceed: Some of that communion allow not even councils to be infallible, and account no doctrine fundamental, unleſs the whole body of the *Roman* church hath received it as ſuch. And how ſhall the ignorant know with certainty when they have all received it, and in what ſenſe they have received it? But why the whole body of the *Roman* church? What claim hath ſhe of being always in the right more than the churches of *Greece*, of *Aſia*, or *Æthiopia*, who differ from her, as well as we, in many things, and allow her no ſuch privilege? Nor, which is more, did St. *Paul* know of any ſhe had in the leaſt; but in his epiſtle to the church of *Rome*, bids her *not to be high-minded, but fear: for if God ſpared not the Jews, take heed, leſt he alſo ſpare not thee. Behold therefore the goodneſs and ſeverity of God: On them, ſeverity; but towards thee, goodneſs; if thou continue in his goodneſs, otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off.* Strange treatment, ſure, of an infallible church! Some perſons therefore have held infallibility to reſide not in the church of *Rome* particularly, but in the whole body of Chriſtians conſidered as one, which indeed is the only true catholic, or univerſal church. But the whole body of Chriſtians, in the nature of things, can never meet: and, were it as eaſy as it is difficult, to collect their ſeveral opinions, what one point ſhould we find them all in all ages agree in as neceſſary, beſides thoſe general doctrines of Chriſtianity, that are on every hand allowed to be clearly contained in ſcripture? Which way ſoever then we ſeek for a rule of faith, to ſcripture-doctrine we muſt return; and therefore the beſt way is never to depart from it.

But here ſome of the *Romaniſts* (for they differ about it) will ſay we wrong them. They admit ſcripture for the rule of faith: but do they admit it for the only one? This they dare not ſay; or, if they did, will they allow us, when we have this rule, to know what it means? No, we muſt never underſtand

underſtand the leaſt part of it, though ever ſo plain, in any different ſenſe from what the church is pleaſed to appoint. What then is this but mocking mankind, and giving with one hand, what they immediately take away with the other? But we, they ſay, are in a pitiable condition; that, having only the dead letter of ſcripture to go by, and no living guide or judge to direct us in the interpretation of it as they have, controverſies are always riſing among us, and can never be decided. To this we anſwer, that controverſies are what they themſelves, even with perſecution to help them, can neither prevent or end any more than we. And in matters of property indeed, ſome deciſion, right or wrong, muſt be made. Society could not ſubſiſt without it: but what need of an infallible deciſion in matters of faith? Why is it not ſufficient that every man determine for himſelf as well as he can in this world; and that God, the only infallible judge, will determine with equity concerning us all in the next? But the generality of people, they ſay, are incapable of judging for themſelves. Yet the New Teſtament ſuppoſes them both capable of it, and bound to it; and accordingly requires them not only to *try the ſpirits*, the pretences to infallibility, *whether they be of God* *, but to *prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good* †. But were this otherwiſe; if they are incapable of judging, why do you perſuade them to change their judgment? Let them alone in the way they are in. But if they have judgment enough to determine whether the catholic church be infallible, whether the church of *Rome* be the catholic church, whether this infallibility be in Pope or council, which decrees of either are genuine, and what is the true meaning of thoſe decrees, all which things they muſt determine, before the infallibility of the church can be any guide to them: if, I ſay, every plain man hath ability enough for ſuch points as theſe, why hath he not ability enough, in other caſes, to underſtand common ſenſe and plain ſcripture: to judge whether tranſubſtantiation, for inſtance, be not contrary to the one, and image-worſhip to the other? The *Romaniſts* themſelves own, that men muſt uſe their eyes to find this guide: why then muſt they afterwards put them out to follow him? eſpecially conſidering that the only rule, which above

* 1 John iv. 1. † 1 Theſſ. v. 21.

above ninety-nine parts in a hundred of their communion have to follow, is not the doctrine of councils and Popes, even were they infallible (for of theſe it is infinitely harder to know any thing than of ſcripture), but merely what a few prieſts and private writers tell them; and ſo at laſt all the pretence to being directed by infallibility ends in being led blindfold by men, confeſſedly as fallible as themſelves. But all Chriſtians are commanded, they ſay, to *obey them that have the rule over them in the Lord* *. And it is true, the teaching of the miniſters of the goſpel ought to be attended upon; their doctrine followed in all clear caſes; and their judgment reſpected, even in doubtful ones. But ſtill we are no more bound to follow our ſpiritual guides into opinions plainly falſe, or practices plainly ſinful, than to follow a common guide down a precipice, or into the ſea, let our own knowledge of the way be ever ſo little, or the other pretences to infallible ſkill in it ever ſo great. The rule therefore for the unlearned and ignorant in religion is this: Let each man improve his own judgment, and increaſe his own knowledge as much as he can; and be fully aſſured that God will expect no more. In matters for which he muſt rely on authority, let him rely on the authority of that church which God's providence hath placed him under, rather than another which he hath nothing to do with; and truſt thoſe, who, by encouraging free inquiry, appear to love truth, rather than ſuch as, by requiring all their doctrines to be implicitly obeyed, ſeem conſcious that they will not bear to be fairly tried. But never let him prefer any authority before that which is the higheſt of all authority, the written word of God. This therefore let us all carefully ſtudy, and not doubt but that whatever things in it are neceſſary to be believed, are eaſy to be underſtood. This let us firmly rely on, and truſt to its truth, when it declares itſelf *able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, perfect, and thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works* †. Let others build on fathers and popes, on traditions and councils, what they will: let us continue firm, as we are, *on the foundation of the apoſtles and prophets, Jeſus Chriſt being the chief corner ſtone* ‡.

* Heb. xiii. 17. † 2 Tim. iii. 13—17. ‡ Eph. ii. 20.

SER-

SERMON XCIX.

The Sacred Scriptures the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.

1 Pet. v. 12.

——Exhorting and teſtifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand.

THE general rule of conduct for men to go by is reaſon; contrary to what this plainly teaches, we neither can nor ought to believe; but beyond what it teaches, on ſufficient authority, we juſtly may. Perſuaſion, founded on authority, is called faith: and that which is founded on the authority of our bleſſed Lord, Chriſtian faith.

Now the rule of this faith, the only means by which we, who live ſo many ages after him, can learn with certainty what things he hath required as neceſſary, and what he hath forbidden as unlawful, I have proved to be the holy ſcriptures. For theſe, which confeſſedly give us a true account of Chriſtianity, do alſo, as I have ſhewn to you, give us a full and ſufficiently clear account of it: and there is none whatever beſides that can be equally depended on. Other antiquity, compared with that of ſcripture, is modern; tradition, in its own nature, ſoon grows uncertain; and infallibility is no where to be found upon earth. The only thing then we have to rely on in Chriſtianity is the written word of God. Whatever this forbids is ſinful; whatever it requires, as a condition of ſalvation, is neceſſary; whatever it does not ſo require, is not neceſſary. By theſe rules therefore of reaſon and ſcripture, let us now proceed, as was propoſed in the ſecond place, to try the chief of thoſe doctrines which diſtinguiſh the church of *Rome* from ours.

To

To begin with that which is naturally firſt, the object of worſhip. We worſhip God, and pray to him through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. This they acknowledge to be right. The ſaints in heaven we love and honour as members of the ſame myſtical body with ourſelves. The holy angels we reverence as the miniſters of the divine will. But as for praying to either, there being no argument for it in reaſon, nor precept in ſcripture, nor indeed example in antiquity, for at leaſt 300 years after ſcripture, it ſurely cannot be a thing neceſſary. Letting it alone is undoubtedly ſafe; whether practiſing it be ſo, the church of *Rome* would do well to conſider. They tell us indeed that they only beg the prayers of the ſaints in heaven, as we do thoſe of good perſons on earth. And were this true (as I ſhall prove it is not), we deſire our fellow Chriſtians on earth to pray for us, becauſe we know they hear our deſires: and ſurely it is reaſon enough not to aſk thoſe in heaven to do it, becauſe we do not know they hear us, nor have the leaſt cauſe to think they do. For ſcripture, which alone could tell us ſo, hath told us no ſuch thing. But beſides, if we can at all underſtand ſcripture, it hath expreſsly forbidden all applications to the inhabitants of the inviſible world, excepting the Supreme Being. *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God*, ſays *Moſes*, *and him only ſhalt thou ſerve* *. *There is one God and one Mediator*, ſays St. *Paul*, *between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus* †. Accordingly we find, that the angel which appeared to St. *John* in the *Revelation*, forbids any religious honour to be paid him, even when preſent. *See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-ſervant: worſhip God* ‡. And when ſome amongſt the *Coloſſians* had affected unjuſtifiable practices of this kind, St. *Paul* cenſures them as being in a very dangerous error. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worſhipping of angels, intruding into thoſe things which he hath not ſeen* §. Yet does the church of *Rome intrude* ſo much farther as to pay undue worſhip to beings far below angels; not only to the ſaints in heaven, but to ſome who were ſo wicked on earth, that there is great reaſon to fear they are in hell; and to others that are mere fictions of their

* Matt. iv. 10. † 1 Tim. ii. 5. ‡ Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 9. § Col. ii. 18.

own imaginations, and never were at all. For the ſake of theſe, and through their merits, they deſire in their publie and authoriſed prayers, God's mercy, ſometimes quite omitting to mention the merits of Chriſt, and ſometimes joining his and theirs together. Farther than this, they directly pray to them, in the houſe of God, and in the ſame poſture in which they pray to God; and that not only to intercede with him for them, but, in ſo many words, that they themſelves *would beſtow grace and mercy upon them, would forgive the guilt of their ſins, deliver them from hell, and grant them a place in heaven.* What pretence is there now in Chriſtianity for ſuch things as theſe? and what doth this tend to, but making the ignorant, eſpecially, think their favourite ſaint can do every thing for them, right or wrong? To him therefore they recommend themſelves, not by a religious life, but by flattering addreſſes and coſtly preſents: on his interceſſion they often depend, much more than on our bleſſed Saviour's; and, being ſecure, as they think, of theſe courtiers of heaven, pay little regard to the King of it. Thus is the intent of religion deſtroyed, and the Heathen multitude of deities brought ſilently back to Chriſtianity. But above all, their worſhip of the virgin *Mary* is very remarkable. We honour her memory as a perſon whom *he that is mighty hath* peculiarly *magnified*, and whom *all generations ſhall call bleſſed* *: but addreſs her in ſuch terms as follow: *Empreſs of heaven;* they *queen of angels and men, through whom, after God, the whole earth liveth; mother of mercy; the fountain of grace and ſalvation; the only hope of ſinners: Who ever truſted in thee, and was confonnded? To thee I commit all my hope, and all my comfort; under thy defence is my refuge; make haſte to help me in all things which I ſhall either do or think every moment of my life; looſe the bonds of the guilty; enlighten the eyes of the blind; free us from all ſin; and drive away from us all evil; grant us to eſcape eternal damnation; and cauſe the glory of paradiſe to be beſtowed on us.* What authority or what excuſe is there now for ſuch expreſſions as theſe? And yet every one of them I have myſelf collected, partly out of their public offices, partly from others of their authoriſed and approved

* Luke i. 48, 49.

proved books of devotion. Formerly in their very maſs-book they went yet farther; and *begged her, by virtue of her parental authority, to command of her ſon what they wanted.* But to this very day, in another office, they intimate the ſame thing, by exhorting her that *ſhe would ſhew herſelf to be his mother.* And the better to make ſure of her doing ſo, they apply to St. *Joachim*, who, they ſay, was her father, though indeed it is not certainly known at all who her father was, much leſs whether he was ſaint or ſinner: However, they apply to St. *Joachim*, and tell him, that *as his daughter can poſſibly deny him nothing, it is in his power to do every thing he will for them.* This, you ſee, is being very artful in making intereſt; only it is more art than is neceſſary. For ſince we are both permitted and appointed to approach God through Chriſt directly, who, we are certain, doth both hear and will help us, we ſhall prejudice, inſtead of benefiting our cauſe, by making underhand applications to other perſons, who perhaps never come to know of our petitions; and, if they do, are diſpleaſed at them; or, if they were not, can be in compariſon of little uſe to us.

Yet to judge by the practice of the *Romiſh* church, who would not think that the whole New Teſtament were filled with precepts for the worſhip of the ſaints, eſpecially the bleſſed virgin? Whereas, even in the *goſpels*, ſhe is but ſeldom and occaſionally mentioned; our Saviour ſeeming on purpoſe to take leſs notice of her, as if he foreſaw what advantages taking more would give to the extravagancies of after times. In the *Acts* ſhe is juſt mentioned once. In the *epiſtles* and *Revelation* not at all. Yet theſe are not half the monſtrous things that the *Romaniſts* are guilty of about her. They have invented a fable of her body being taken up into heaven, and appointed a ſolemn feſtival in honour of it. They have inſtituted a form of devotion called the *Roſary*, in which ten addreſſes are made to her for one to God; and ſucceſſive Popes have granted large indulgences and bleſſings to all that ſhall ſay it. Then their private writers about her have gone incredible lengths. One of their cardinals, *Bonaventure*, by putting her name inſtead of God's, and ſome other neceſſary alterations, hath applied the whole book of *Pſalms* to her. In the ſame manner he hath altered the *Te Deum*.

We praiſe thee, O Mary; we acknowledge thee to be the lady; and ſo in the other hymns of the church. Nay, he hath made a creed for her in imitation of St. *Athanaſius's. Whoever will be ſaved, it is neceſſary that he hold the true faith concerning Mary; which, except a man keep whole and undefiled, he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly.* Now, if their church do really diſapprove theſe things, why do they never cenſure them? Why is this very man canonized for a ſaint, whilſt we are condemned as heretics? For not content with thinking this kind of worſhip lawful, they pronounce accurſed whoever ſhall think otherwiſe.

Another thing we differ in is this: They make pictures of God the Father, under the likeneſs of a venerable old man. They make images of Chriſt and of his ſaints after their own fancy. Before theſe images, and even that of his croſs, they kneel down and proſtrate themſelves: to theſe they lift up their eyes, and in that poſture pray. The leaſt appearance of command, or even the allowance of ſuch practices in ſcripture they pretend not; and yet againſt thoſe who diſallow them, they thunder out anathemas. Now, as to pictures of the Father Almighty, *whom no man either hath ſeen, or can ſee* *, all viſible figures muſt repreſent him ſuch as he is not; muſt lead the ignorant into low and mean ideas of him; and give thoſe of better abilities, from a contempt of ſuch repreſentation, a contempt of the religion that uſes them. Anciently the *Heathens* themſelves had no images of God; and a very learned *Heathen* obſerves, that if they had never had any, their worſhip would have been the purer; for the inventors of theſe things, ſays he, leſſened among men the reverence of the divine nature, and introduced errors concerning it †. The *Jews*, though the Old Teſtament figuratively expreſſes, in words, the power and attributes of God by parts of the human form, were yet moſt ſtrictly forbidden all ſenſible repreſentations of him under any form. *Take good heed unto yourſelves*, ſays Moſes, *for ye ſaw no manner of ſimilitude on the day that the Lord ſpoke to you in Horeb; leſt ye corrupt yourſelves,*

* 1 Tim. vi. 16.

† Varro ap. S. Aug. de Civ. Dei. l. 4. c. 31. where he ſays they had none for 170 years. But *Tarquinius Priſcus* introduced them. See *Tenſon* on Idol. p. 59.

yourſelves, leſt ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, and make the ſimilitude of any figure; for the Lord thy God is a conſuming fire, even a jealous God *. Accordingly we find, that when they had made a golden image, though it was expreſsly deſigned in honour of that God who brought them out of *Egypt*, it was notwithſtanding puniſhed as idolatry. And far from allowing to Chriſtians what was then forbidden the *Jews*, St. *Paul* moſt ſeverely condemns it in the very Heathens, that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man* †. Yet how near doth this approach to what the church of *Rome* doth now, in making pictures of God the Father! Our bleſſed Saviour indeed, having taken on him human nature, is capable to be repreſented in a human form. But, as all ſuch repreſentations muſt be imaginary ones, ſo they are uſeleſs ones too. The memorials of himſelf, which he hath appointed in the ſacrament, we may be aſſured is ſufficient to all good purpoſes; and theſe other memorials have always produced abſurd and wicked ſuperſtitions. As for the images of the ſaints, it is ſufficient to ſay, that there being no pretence for worſhipping the ſaints themſelves, there is yet leſs pretence for worſhipping theſe repreſentations of them. But here the church of *Rome* will ſay we wrong them: they do not worſhip images, but only Chriſt and his ſaints by theſe images. But indeed it is they who wrong themſelves then. For not a few of their own writers ‡ frankly own they do worſhip images, and with the ſame degree of worſhip that they pay to the perſons whoſe images they are. And for the croſs particularly, in their public offices, they expreſsly declare themſelves to adore it; and, in plain words, petition it in one of their hymns, *to give increaſe of grace to the righteous, and pardon to the guilty*. This, they ſay, is a poetical licence; and truly, in ſo ſerious a thing as worſhip, no ſmall one.

* Deut. iv. 15—24. † Rom. i. 21, 23.

‡ *Aquinas*, &c. See *Trapp.* Ch. of *England* defended, p. 219. They put in the *Index Exp.* thoſe paſſages in marginal notes and indexes that ſay the contrary. See Inſtances, ib. 235. They are to be worſhipped, ſays *Bellarmine*, *ita ut ipſæ terminent venerationem, ut in ſe conſiderantur & non ſolum ut vicem gerunt exemplaris. Bellarm. de Imag.* l. ii. c. 24. *ap. Vitm in If.* xliv. 20.

one. But farther: had they no regard to the image, but only to the perſon repreſented, why is an image in one place looked upon to have ſo much more power and virtue, than an image of the ſame perſon in another place? Why hath that of our lady of *Loretto*, for inſtance, ſo much more honour done it, than that of our lady any where elſe? We own the council of *Trent* does give a caution, that no divinity be aſcribed to images, nor any truſt put in them: And the Heathens gave the like caution often with reſpect to theirs: but this never hinders the ſcripture from condemning them as idolaters. And the reaſon is, that ſuch cautions never are, or can be obſerved by the multitude. Place ſenſible objects before them to direct their worſhip to, and in thoſe objects their worſhip will terminate. This the primitive Chriſtians ſaw too plainly in the Heathens, ever to think of imitating them. Accordingly neither images nor pictures were allowed in churches for near 400 years. And when, after being more than once condemned, they came to be allowed, no honour was intended to be paid to them. On the contrary, when it began to be paid, which indeed was not long, it was ſeverely cenſured, and particularly in the eighth century, by above 300 biſhops, aſſembled in council at *Conſtantinople*. But about thirty years after, the ſecond council of *Nice* (ſo ill did councils agree), eſtabliſhed it. Yet even this council held repreſentations of *God* to be unlawful. And all the weſtern countries, except *Italy*, under the Pope's immediate direction, continued to condemn the *worſhip* of *all* repreſentations for ſome ages afterwards. But by degrees it firſt became general, and then ſo groſsly ſcandalous, that the church of *Rome*, it ſeems, hath judged it the wiſeſt way to leave the ſecond commandment, which too plainly forbids theſe things, out of their ſmaller books of devotion, under the abſurd pretence of its being only a part, I ſuppoſe an inſignificant one, of the firſt; though, ſince they have been charged with this, they have thought fit in ſome of them, but not in all, to reſtore it again. And here let us quit the article of image-worſhip, with the Pſalmiſt's remark upon it. *They that make them are like unto them; ſo is every one that truſteth in them. O Iſrael, truſt thou in the Lord* *.

But

* Pſ. cxv. 8, 9.

But there ſtill remains another object of *Popiſh* worſhip, the ſacramental bread and wine. For they have made it an article of faith, that the ſubſtance of theſe is, by the words of conſecration, entirely changed into the ſubſtance of the living body and blood of Chriſt; which change therefore they call *tranſubſtantiation*. Now, were this really the body of Chriſt, it is allowed we have no command to worſhip it under this diſguiſe, and therefore commit no ſin in letting ſuch worſhip alone. But if it be really not ſo, they own themſelves to pay that honour to a bit of bread, which belongs only to the eternal Son of God. And ſurely one ſhould think it a queſtion eaſily decided, whether a ſmall wafer, which is the bread they uſe on theſe occaſions, be the body of a man, and whether wine in a cup be blood. Almoſt every one of our ſenſes will tell us it is not: And though, in ſome haſty or diſtant appearances of things, our ſenſes may be deceived, yet if, where there is all poſſible opportunity of examining the matter, we cannot be ſure of what our own eyes and our own feeling, our ſmelling and taſting, all inform us of, then we can be ſure of nothing. It is only by ſuch evidence that we know any thing in this world: it is by no other that we know we have a revelation from God, and that this ſacrament is appointed in it. If therefore we are not to believe our ſenſes, how are we to believe any thing at all? But indeed what they tell us in this caſe, is as contrary to all reaſon, as it is to all ſenſe. That a human body, in its full dimenſions, ſhould be contained in the ſpace of an inch or two, looks as like a contradiction as any thing well can do: that the ſubſtance of bread ſhould not be in the ſacrament, where they own all the properties of bread are; and that the ſubſtance of fleſh ſhould be there, and not one of the properties of it appear, is very monſtrous; and that the very ſame body of Chriſt, which is now in heaven at the right hand of God, ſhould at the ſame time be on earth in the right hand of the prieſt; and that there ſhould be ſeveral thouſands of thoſe bodies upon earth, at many hundred of miles diſtance from one another, and yet all theſe be that very ſame one body alſo, this is ſuch talk, that for ſober perſons, in their ſober ſenſes, to uſe it, and keep their countenance, is very ſtrange. If one and one be two, then one body of Chriſt here, and one body

body of Chriſt there, make two bodies of Chriſt, which they own he hath not. And if one body can be in more than one place at one time, we may all of us perhaps be now this very inſtant at *Rome* as well as here. A man may be at ever ſo many thouſand miles diſtance from himſelf, and afterwards he may come and meet himſelf (as two of their pretended real bodies of Chriſt often do), and then paſs by himſelf, and go away from himſelf, to the ſame diſtance he was at before; he may in one place be ſtanding ſtill, in another be carried along, and ſo be in motion and not in motion at the ſame time. Men may ſay ſuch things as theſe if they will; and they may believe them if they can: but in order to it, well do they direct their poor people to profeſs, in their *Engliſh* Manual of Prayers before Maſs, 1725, p. 409. *Herein I utterly renounce the judgment of my ſenſes, and all human underſtanding.*

Here therefore we fix our foot: If theſe things be to every man living evidently abſurd and impoſſible, then let nobody ever regard the moſt ſpecious pretences of proving ſuch doctrines, or the authority of a church that maintains them. It is no hard matter for an artful man, a little practiſed in diſputing, ſo to confound a plain man upon almoſt any ſubject, that he ſhall not well know how to anſwer, though he ſees himſelf to be right, and the other wrong. This is an art which the prieſts of the church of *Rome* are well verſed in. Indeed the chief part of their learning is to puzzle themſelves firſt, and as many others as they can afterwards. But always obſerve this rule: Stick to common ſenſe againſt the world: and whenever a man would perſuade you of any thing evidently contrary to that, never be moved by any tricks and fetches of ſophiſtry, let him uſe ever ſo many. He will be for proving to you by round-about arguments, of which you are unqualified to judge, that his church is infallible, and therefore tranſubſtantiation is true. Do you anſwer him by a much plainer argument, of which you are very well qualified to judge, that tranſubſtantiation cannot poſſibly be true, and therefore his church is not infallible.

But they plead, with God all things are poſſible, and therefore this is ſo. Now we own that all things which are not impoſſible in themſelves, are poſſible with him; but God himſelf

himſelf cannot do what in its own nature cannot be done. For inſtance, he cannot deſtroy his own being, he cannot ceaſe to be juſt and good, becauſe this hath a contradiction in it; and, for the ſame reaſon, he cannot do any thing elſe that hath a contradiction in it; for that would be doing a thing, and at the ſame time not doing it: to aſcribe which to God, is not to magnify, but mock his power.

But they ſay further, that tranſubſtantiation hath no more difficulty than the Trinity hath. But ſurely the difference is very viſible. The doctrine of the Trinity indeed is a myſtery; that is, the whole of the ſubject cannot be fully underſtood by us: but in tranſubſtantiation there is no myſtery at all. For the moſt evident falſehoods are juſt as clearly underſtood to be ſo as the moſt evident truths. In the Trinity there is nothing we ſee to be falſe, only we do not ſee the particular manner in which ſome things ſaid concerning it are true; but in tranſubſtantiation there are many things we ſee to be falſe, and which can in no manner be true. Let them ſhew us any contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity, and we will believe it no longer. In the mean time, ſince we have ſhewn contradiction in tranſubſtantiation, let *them* believe *that* no longer.

But they have ſcripture to plead for it. Now, if this were a doctrine of ſcripture, it would ſooner prove ſcripture to be falſe, than ſcripture could prove it to be true; and therefore the Papiſts, by making ſuch a monſtrous abſurdity an article of faith, have loaded their religion with a weight, which, did it belong to Chriſtianity, were able to ſink it. But, God be thanked, ſcripture is no more on their ſide than reaſon. We know indeed that our Saviour ſaid, when he gave the ſacrament, *This is my body:* but ſo at another time he ſaid, *Verily verily I am the door of the ſheep:* and at a third, *I am the vine.* And ſo have all mankind always called a repreſentation of any thing by the name of what it repreſented. Why then is he not to be underſtood in the ſame figure here? How do we think the apoſtles underſtood him but as they were uſed to do in ſuch caſes? They who were ſo backward at comprehending difficult things, and ſo ready to aſk queſtions about them, did they, without any ſurpriſe or any queſtion, apprehend that our Saviour then took his own body in his

own hand, and gave that one body to each of his twelve apoſtles at the ſame time, and that each of them ſwallowed him down their throats, though he was all the while ſitting at the table along with them? Such things are too ridiculous to be mentioned in a ſerious place; and yet theſe men force us to it, by gravely requiring us to believe them. The only conſiderable paſſage beſides, that they plead, is in the ſixth chapter of St. *John*; where many *Jews* having followed our Saviour, becauſe he had fed them with the miracle of the loaves, he bids them *labour not for the meat which periſheth, but that which endureth unto everlaſting life, which he would give them, who is the true bread from heaven.* Now, were this meant of the ſacrament, and to be underſtood literally, we muſt conclude not bread turned into Chriſt's body, but his body turned into bread; which is quite the contrary to what they hold. But indeed the whole is only a figurative way of ſaying that the ſouls of men receive from the fruits of his death a much more valuable nouriſhment than their bodies receive from their daily food. Juſt as he elſewhere ſays *, *Whoever drinketh of the water that I ſhall give him, it ſhall be in him a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life*; which nobody ever underſtood literally: and juſt as Wiſdom ſpeaks herſelf in *Ecclus.* xxiv. 21. *They that eat me ſhall yet be hungry, and they that drink me ſhall yet be thirſty*; that is, they who have taſted the pleaſures and benefits of virtue, will always deſire a ſtill greater experience of them. But the *Jews*, with their uſual perverſeneſs, cavilling at theſe words of our Saviour's, he goes on very ſtrongly to aſſert the propriety of them, that *his fleſh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; that he who eateth the one, and drinketh the other, dwelleth in him, and liveth by him, but he that doth not, hath no life in him.* But now theſe words being ſpoken, you ſee, concerning the preſent time, *My fleſh is meat indeed*, and ſo on, cannot principally relate to the ſacrament, for there was yet no ſuch thing, nor till a year or two after. Beſides, it is not true that he, and he only, who eateth the ſacrament, ſhall dwell in Chriſt, and live by him: for perſons may poſſibly have no opportunity of receiving the ſacrament, and yet be very

* John iv. 14.

very good Chriſtians, and too many receive it frequently, and yet are very bad Chriſtians. The meaning therefore plainly is, that our Saviour's coming and ſuffering in the fleſh, and ſhedding his blood for mankind, is the ſpiritual life of the world: that whoever imbibes the doctrine he taught in his life, and partakes by faith of the benefits he procured at his death, his ſoul is inwardly ſtrengthened by them, and ſhall be finally preſerved to a happy immortality. For in this ſpiritual and figurative ſenſe he immediately directs his diſciples to underſtand his words, when miſunderſtanding them in a groſs and literal one had ſomewhat ſtaggered them. *Doth this*, ſays he, *offend you? It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the fleſh profiteth nothing. The words that I ſpeak unto you, they are ſpirit and they are life.* His manner of expreſſion had the ſame intent with that paſſage of St. *Paul**, where he ſays, *the Iſraelites did all eat the ſame ſpiritual meat, and did all drink the ſame ſpiritual drink. For they drank of the ſpiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Chriſt.* The Papiſts themſelves do not think from hence, that the *Jews* did eat and drink Chriſt literally: and Chriſtians do it in the ſame manner they did, only with a clearer and more diſtinct faith. For in this ſpiritual ſenſe Chriſt himſelf explains his words; we firmly believe *his body and blood to be verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper*; that is, an union with him, to be not only repreſented, but really and effectually communicated to the worthy receiver. But as for any other ſenſe, if we did, or could do ſo monſtrous a thing, as literally to eat the fleſh, and drink the blood of our dear Lord, it is not that which could do our ſouls any good, but only his grace accompanying this ſacrament; which may as well accompany it without any change of the bread and wine, as it accompanies that of baptiſm, without any change of the water.

We ſee then that ſcripture by no means favours tranſubſtantiation. It is indeed expreſs againſt it. For St. *Paul* more than once tells us, that what we eat in the ſacrament is *bread*, and as for what we drink, when our Saviour ſays, *this is my blood which is ſhed for you*, if he had meant literally, he

* 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

had ſpoke falſely; for his blood was not ſhed till afterwards, and could not be drank then. Neither is it in a condition of being ſhed at preſent, and therefore cannot be drank now. But too much hath been ſaid of this monſtrous doctrine, to which the indiſcretion of well-meaning writers gave the firſt occaſion pretty early, whilſt they affected to heighten the figurative expreſſions of ſcripture, by ſtill more figurative ones of their own; little thinking, at the ſame time, that ſuch an abſurd meaning, as the Papiſts now plead for, could ever be aſcribed to them; and plainly ſhewing, by innumerable proofs, that it is unjuſtly aſcribed to them. But as ignorance and ſuperſtition increaſed, about 800 years after Chriſt this amazing notion began to be diſtinctly and explicitly entertained and aſſerted, which ſome had the good ſenſe to oppoſe; ſome the weakneſs to receive, as a myſtery that promoted the reverence of the ſacrament; others the wickedneſs to ſupport with zeal, as an artifice that increaſed the authority of the prieſt: for what could he not do, who, as they blaſphemouſly expreſs it, could make God? By degrees then this doctrine prevailed, till, in the 13th century, it was eſtabliſhed as an article of faith. And when once the ſpeculative error, of believing the conſecrated bread and wine to be literally the body and blood of Chriſt obtained, the practical one of worſhipping them as ſuch quickly followed. For though a decent reſpect was always paid to the ſacrament, yet a direct adoration to the elements was never paid, till the dark and ſuperſtitious ages above-mentioned introduced ſo ſenſeleſs an idolatry, to the infinite ſcandal of religion. May God, who mercifully winked at the times of Heathen ignorance, overlook this leſs excuſable folly of Chriſtianity, and *forgive them, for they know not what they do.* But let us all remember, that our caſe will be much worſe than theirs, if, after the light hath ſo clearly ſhone upon us, we return to darkneſs again: if, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, *we change the truth of God into a lie, and worſhip the creature inſtead of the Creator, who is bleſſed for evermore*[*]. *Amen.*

[*] Rom. i. 25.

SER.

SERMON C.

The Sacred Scriptures the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.

1 Pet. v. 12.

——Exhorting and teſtifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand.

HAVING propoſed from theſe words, firſt, to ſhew what is the rule of Chriſtian faith and practice; and, ſecondly, to examine by this rule the chief differences between the church of *Rome* and ours: the former head I have finiſhed, and made ſome progreſs in the latter. The honour paid by them to ſaints and images, the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, and the worſhip built upon it of the ſacramental bread and wine, have been conſidered: and now I proceed to another peculiarity of theirs, with reſpect to the ſacrament, withholding the cup from the laity. That our Saviour adminiſtered the holy euchariſt, in both kinds, they acknowledge; nay, that he expreſsly commanded thoſe, to whom he adminiſtered it, that they ſhould *all drink of that cup*. What therefore he commands all to do, why do they forbid all but the prieſt to do? Why, the apoſtles, they ſay, were commanded to take the cup as well as the bread, becauſe they were clergy: but the church of *Rome* forbids even the clergy, excepting thoſe who officiate, to take it. Beſides, if the command of receiving the *cup* relates only to the clergy, that of receiving the *bread* too muſt relate only to the clergy; for there is no manner of diſtinction made in the goſpel. Yet they own the laity are obliged, by our Saviour's command, to receive the bread, and therefore they are obliged, by the ſame command, to receive the cup; which that they did accordingly, the eleventh chapter

ter of the firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians* makes as plain as words can make any thing. Not to ſay further, that if the ſixth of St. *John* relate immediately to the ſacrament, as they are ſometimes very poſitive it doth, the fifty-third verſe of that chapter expreſsly declares, that, unleſs we *drink the blood of the Son of Man*, as well *as eat his fleſh*, we *have no life in us*.

But they tell us, our Saviour himſelf, after his reſurrection, adminiſtered the ſacrament in one kind only. For St. *Luke* ſays, that ſitting down to eat with the two diſciples at *Emmaus*, *He took bread, and bleſſed it, and brake, and gave to them*; and, upon their knowing him, *vaniſhed out of their ſight* *. Now it happens, that this was not adminiſtering the ſacrament at all, but doing juſt the ſame thing, which the evangeliſts, in juſt the ſame words, tell us he did, when he fed the multitudes with the loaves and fiſhes, and indeed at every meal he eat. For the *Jews*, in the beginning of every meal of theirs, uſe the very ſame cuſtom to this day †. But they further plead, that however that be, at leaſt when in the Acts of the Apoſtles it is ſaid, the *diſciples met together to break bread on the firſt day of the week* ‡, this muſt be the ſacrament, and the cup is not once mentioned there as given. We anſwer, it is not certain that even this was the ſacrament; and ſuppoſing it was, as, in ſcripture-language, common feaſts are expreſſed by the ſingle phraſe of eating bread, which yet ſurely does not prove that the gueſts drank nothing, ſo neither is it proved by a religious feaſt being expreſſed in the ſame manner. And beſides, if there is no mention there of the laity's receiving the cup, there is none of the prieſt's receiving it neither; yet this they think abſolutely neceſſary: and if one may be taken for granted, without being mentioned, the other may. Nor ſhould it be forgotten on this occaſion, that as the phraſe of eating ſometimes comprehends the whole of this action, ſo doth that of drinking: *we have all been made to drink into one Spirit*, ſays the apoſtle §; who hence proves the unity of all Chriſtians, and therefore certainly thought it was the right of all Chriſtians ‖. But they plead

* Luke xxiv. 30, 31. † *Buxtorf.* Synag. Jud. c. 12. ‡ Acts xx. 7.
§ 1 Cor. xii. 13. ‖ *Claget*, Vol. i. Serm. x. p. 265.

plead farther, that the laity, by receiving the body of Chriſt, receive his blood alſo, for the blood is contained in the body. But here they quite forget, that our Saviour hath appointed this ſacrament to be received for a memorial of his blood's being ſhed out of his body, of which, they who receive not the cup, do not make the memorial which he commanded, when he ſaid, *Drink ye all of this.* Still they inſiſt, that there being no peculiar virtue or benefit annexed to this part of the ſacrament that they with-hold, which does not belong to the other, it is no manner of loſs to the laity to omit it. Now does not the ſame reaſon prove equally that the clergy may omit it too? But beſides, what treatment of our bleſſed Lord is this, when he hath appointed all Chriſtians to perform a ſolemn act of religion, conſiſting of two parts, both with equal ſtrictneſs enjoined, for the church of *Rome* to ſay that one of them the far greateſt part of Chriſtians ſhall not perform, for it is full as well let alone; nay, better indeed, if we believe them; for the cup, they tell us, may be drank of immoderately, may be ſpilled, many dreadful inconveniences may happen from truſting it with the laity? Now, it is ſtrange our Saviour ſhould not be wiſe enough to foreſee theſe inconveniences; it is ſtrange we ſhould not experience them neither; and it adds to the wonder not a little, that the whole church of Chriſt, for 1200 years, ſhould not be able to find them out any more than we. For in all that time, the cup was conſtantly given to the laity in their public communions, though there are ſome inſtances, yet neither many, nor early ones, in which the bread alone was carried to private houſes. And when ſome of the laity, for abſurd reaſons, refuſed to take the cup, no leſs than three Popes condemned them. But ſuperſtitious imaginations gradually increaſing amongſt Chriſtians, a cuſtom aroſe firſt of giving the bread, dipt in wine, inſtead of both ſeparate; and at laſt in the 15th century, and council of *Conſtance*, the ſame which decreed ſo honeſtly, that promiſes made to the prejudice of the catholic faith ought not to be kept *, decreed alſo very modeſtly, that notwithſtanding (for ſo they expreſs it) our Saviour adminiſtered both kinds, one only ſhall be adminiſtered for the future to the laity. And

* See *Courayer's* Council of *Trent*, Vol. i. p. 595.

And now it is made an article of their creed, that the whole ſacrament is given by giving this part: ſo that whoever ſhall ſay both are neceſſary (which, if it be not a truth, one ſhould think could not be a hereſy), is by the council of *Trent* pronounced accurſed.

Another difference between the church of *Rome* and ours, with reſpect to the ſacrament, is this. They hold that as often as it is celebrated, Chriſt is truly and properly offered up a ſacrifice for our ſins. Now we acknowledge, that every act of obedience, and of worſhip more eſpecially, may, agreeably to the language of ſcripture, be ſpoken of as a ſacrifice to our Maker: that his creatures of bread and wine, when appropriated to this ſolemn act of religion, are ſo far offerings to God; and that this whole act, being a memorial and repreſentation of the ſacrifice of Chriſt, may fitly enough be called by the ſame name with what it commemorates and repreſents: ſo that in this ſenſe Chriſtians have an altar and an offering upon it. But that, inſtead of a repreſentative ſacrifice of praiſe, it ſhould be a real ſacrifice of atonement, in which Chriſt's body, literally ſpeaking, is every day offered up anew, of this we can ſee neither proof nor poſſibility. For not only it ſuppoſes tranſubſtantiation to be true, which hath been proved to be falſe, but it is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the whole chapters of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; the ninth and tenth, which throughout inculcate that *Chriſt was not to be offered up often, for then muſt he often have ſuffered; but that he appeared once to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf; was once offered to bear the ſins of many; and by this one offering hath for ever perfected them that are ſanctified.* If therefore our doctrine be heretical in this point, St. *Paul's* is ſo too; not to ſpeak of the primitive Chriſtians, who, though they often called this ordinance a ſacrifice, yet, by calling it an unbloody one, ſhew they did not think the blood of Chriſt was literally offered up in it; and by frequently ſaying they had indeed no ſacrifices, prove themſelves to look on this only as a figurative one.

But now, from this notion of a daily atonement thus made, I ſhall proceed to their other doctrines concerning the forgiveneſs of ſins. And here they hold, that a particular abſolution from a prieſt is neceſſary, if it can be had, for the pardon of every

every mortal ſin, *i. e.* every ſin by which any perſon, without repentance, forfeits his title to heaven; and that a particular confeſſion of every material circumſtance of every ſuch ſin, is neceſſary for abſolution. And the practice of theſe things they apprehend to give their church an unſpeakable advantage over ours.

The neceſſity of ſuch abſolution they plead for from our Saviour's words to his apoſtles: *Whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven; and whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven* *. *Whoſeſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted; and whoſeſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained* †. Now certainly theſe words did not put it in the power of the apoſtles themſelves, to pardon, or refuſe to pardon, whom they pleaſed, right or wrong. They could uſe the keys of the kingdom of heaven no further than he ſaw fit, *who openeth, and no man ſhutteth; who ſhutteth, and no man openeth* ‡. Yet the apoſtles had great powers by virtue of theſe words, which we have not: the power of diſcerning by the Spirit, in many caſes at leaſt, and therefore of declaring who were penitent and pardoned, who otherwiſe: the power of inflicting and continuing miraculous puniſhments on wicked perſons, which is *binding and retaining* their ſin and of removing ſuch puniſhments, which is *looſing and remitting* them. But theſe things the *Romiſh* clergy can no more claim than we. What then beſides can there be conveyed by theſe words of our Lord? A power of preaching that goſpel, according to the terms of which alone the ſins of men ſhall be forgiven or puniſhed; a power of admitting perſons into a ſtate of forgiveneſs by baptiſm; of adminiſtering to them the word of God and the holy ſacrament, as means of grace; of denouncing his wrath againſt all ſinners; interceding with him for all penitents; and pronouncing, in his name, that he pardons and abſolves them. Theſe things, we truſt, are done much more faithfully by us than them. There is indeed another power, of exerciſing ſpiritual diſcipline, for the honour of the church, and the ſake of example, to diſtinguiſh, ſo far as men are able, between the good, by admitting them to communion with us, and the bad, by excluding them from

* Matt. xviii. 18. † John xx. 23. ‡ Rev. iii. 7.

it. In this we acknowledge that we are deficient; but they are worſe: for they have utterly perverted it from a public inſtitution of general uſe and influence, to a ſecret tranſaction between a ſinner and his confeſſor, in which not only ſuch abſolution is made neceſſary, as the ſcripture hath no where required, but ſuch confeſſion inſiſted on as is no way needful to it. Not needful from any command of God: for the chief and almoſt only text they plead for that purpoſe, *Confeſs your faults one to another* *, no more obliges the people, in all caſes, to reveal the particulars of their ſins to the prieſt, than the prieſt to reveal the particulars of his to the people. Nor is it needful from the nature of the thing: for it is not knowing a perſon's ſins that can qualify the prieſt to give him abſolution, but knowing he hath repented of them; which is juſt as poſſible to be known without a particular confeſſion as with it.

Still, in many caſes, acknowledging the errors of our lives, and opening the ſtate of our ſouls to the miniſters of God's word, for their opinion, their advice, and their prayers, may be extremely uſeful, ſometimes neceſſary. And whenever perſons think it ſo, we are ready both to hear them with the utmoſt ſecreſy, and to aſſiſt them with our beſt care; to direct them how they may be forgiven, if we think they are not; to pronounce them forgiven, if we think they are: only we muſt beg them to remember, that none but God can pardon ſins as to their conſequences in another world. Men indeed may take off from ſinners the cenſures of the church, if they have incurred them; but as to any thing farther, all we can do is either to pray to God that he would forgive them (which was the only form of abſolution till the eleventh century at leaſt), or elſe to declare that he hath done ſo. And let ſuch a declaration expreſs ever ſo poſitively that either God or the prieſt abſolves them, it is a fatal error to build hopes on this, with reſpect to another life, any further than conditionally, that if their repentance be ſufficient, their forgiveneſs is certain. But whether it be ſufficient or no, the prieſts of our church can give their judgment, and thoſe of the church of *Rome* can poſſibly do no more; for they muſt own themſelves to be as fallible as we are.

But

* James v. 16.

But as neither reaſon nor ſcripture makes confeſſion and abſolution of this kind neceſſary, ſo neither did the primitive church hold it to be ſo. Public confeſſion indeed they required in caſes of public ſcandal; but for private confeſſion in all caſes, it was never thought of as a command of God for 900 years after Chriſt, nor determined to be ſuch till after 1200, when the ſame council of *Lateran* decreed it, which decreed alſo the depoſing of ſuch princes as would not extirpate hereſy: and yet it is amazing what ſtreſs they now lay upon it. No repentance, they tell us, will avail, if it be neglected; and almoſt any will do, if it be obſerved. For let a dying ſinner have only what they call attrition, ſuch a ſorrow as ariſes merely from the fear of being puniſhed, without the leaſt degree of diſlike to ſin or love to God, this ſorrow, though not ſufficient without abſolution, yet with it is. So that if a perſon, who hath diſregarded God all his life, can but be made afraid of him at his death, the prieſt ſhall deliver him from hell, and ſecure heaven to him, by a word ſpeaking. Some leſſer puniſhments indeed he doth remain ſubject to firſt; as to which, however, there are ways of making matters as eaſy as can well be wiſhed: but in order to underſtand them, another head of *Popiſh* doctrine muſt be explained.

Our Saviour, they tell us, having procured for repenting ſinners the forgiveneſs only of the eternal puniſhment due to their ſins, there remains a temporal puniſhment due to them ſtill, which, if it be not in this life, either inflicted by worldly ſufferings, or ſatisfied for by good works and penances, muſt be undergone after death, in the pains of a place called *Purgatory*; which pains may, however, be mitigated and ſhortened, partly by offering up prayers for ſuch perſons, and partly by granting indulgencies to them: and theſe things alſo we are heretics for not believing. Yet, for the neceſſity of our believing theſe doctrines, they pretend no ſcripture-proof, and they have no proof for ſo much as the truth of them. Heaven and hell we read of perpetually in the bible, but purgatory we never meet with; though ſurely, if there be ſuch a place, Chriſt and his apoſtles would not have concealed it from us. St. *Paul* indeed mentions *a fire that tries every man's works, and perſons that ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire**.

* 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15.

But what is he there ſpeaking of? He had been laying amongſt them, he ſays, the foundation of religion, the acknowledgment of Jeſus Chriſt. *On this*, ſays he, *another man hath built: but let every man take heed how he buildeth*; what he teaches for Chriſtian doctrine; *for the day ſhall declare it, and the fire ſhall try every man's work of what ſort it is*: either the day of the fiery trial of perſecution, or rather the final judgment of God, *whoſe day ſhall burn like an oven* *, this ſhall try every man's work, ſearch it as thoroughly as fire does things that are put into it; then, *if any man's work which he hath built abide*, if the doctrines he hath taught bear the teſt, *he ſhall receive a reward*; but, *if his work be burnt*, if, preſerving the fundamentals of Chriſtianity, he hath built errors on them, *he ſhall ſuffer loſs*; the pains he hath taken ſhall be of no benefit, and though he may be ſaved himſelf, it ſhall be like one that eſcapes through the fire, with great danger and difficulty. For ſo St. *Jude* ſpeaks: *Some ſave with fear, pulling them out of the fire* †: and the prophet *Amos*, *Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning* ‡. This paſſage therefore relates not to puniſhing, in purgatory, the perſons of ſome men, before the day of judgment, but to trying the works of all men at the day of judgment; and, far from patroniſing the church of *Rome*, gives them indeed an awful warning not *to build on the foundation* of Chriſtianity *hay and ſtubble*, ſuch uſeleſs traſh as this, and many other of their doctrines, which that great day of the Lord will ſhew to have no ſolidity in them; but *their work ſhall be burnt up, themſelves ſuffer loſs, and at beſt be ſaved only ſo as by fire.* Their other texts for purgatory are, if poſſible, leſs to the purpoſe than this: that *blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven, either in this life or that to come* §; which is only ſaying, it ſhall never be forgiven, but puniſhed both here and hereafter: that he who *agrees not with his adverſary in the way, ſhall be caſt by the judge into priſon, and not come out till he hath paid the uttermoſt farthing* ‖; which perhaps is only ſaying, that whoever doth not make up a difference with his neighbour before trial, muſt expect no favour after: Or, if God be the judge meant,

* Mal. iv. 1. † Jude, ver. 23. ‡ Amos iv. 11.
§ Matt. xii. 32. ‖ Matt. v. 25, 26.

meant, the ſenſe will be, that the perſon condemned ſhall never come out of priſon, becauſe he can never *pay the uttermoſt farthing*. For uncharitableneſs unrepented of, which is the crime here mentioned, the Papiſts themſelves own, ſends men not to purgatory, but to hell. As for their notion, that our Saviour hath not procured forgiveneſs of the temporal puniſhment of ſin, it is certain from ſcripture, that he hath procured the forgiveneſs of every thing that can properly be called puniſhment; for *his blood cleanſeth us from all ſin* *, and therefore no purgatory is needful. And *there is no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus* †, and conſequently no ſuch place to be condemned to. Correction indeed there is, but this correction is the work, not of an offended judge, but a merciful Father: and as he, by theſe and many other means, endeavours to amend us, ſo we ſhould uſe all proper means to amend ourſelves: but ſuch penances as tend only to give pain, are not proper means, even in this life, which is our only time of amendment; much leſs will any ſuch be inflicted on good men in the other, when they will come too late for any valuable purpoſe. *Bleſſed*, ſays the angel, *are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth*, from the hour of their death, *for they reſt from their labours* ‡. But miſerable, ſays the church of *Rome*, are many of the dead that die in the Lord, for a long time after, for they reſt not from their labours, but labour under moſt grievous ſufferings. But indeed even their own apocryphal ſcriptures might have taught them better than this. *The ſouls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there ſhall no torment touch them* §. Nor is their plea from antiquity better than that from ſcripture. For though many had adopted ſtrange notions of theſe things, out of Heathen fable and philoſophy, into the Chriſtian religion, yet purgatory, in the preſent Popiſh ſenſe, was not heard of for 400 years after Chriſt; nor univerſally received, even in the weſtern churches, for 1000 years; nor almoſt in any other church, than that of *Rome*, to this day. But ſuppoſing there were ſuch a place, how do they know concerning any particular perſon that he ever comes into it, or how long he ſtays in it? And if not, what is it but *offering the ſacrifice of fools* ‖, to

* 1 John i. 7. † Rom. viii. 1. ‡ Rev. xvi. 13.
§ Wiſd. iii. 1. ‖ Eccleſ. v. 1.

to make thouſands of prayers for one who may be quite out of the reach of them, either in heaven, or perhaps in hell? Though indeed, by praying for the very wickedeſt of men, as only in purgatory, they ſtrongly tempt other wicked men to conclude, that none of their communion ever go to hell. And thus is this invention at once ſo great a terror to good perſons, and ſo great a comfort to bad ones, that one cannot help applying to it the prophet's words: *With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous ſad, whom I have not made ſad: and ſtrengthened the hands of the wicked, that he ſhould not return from his wicked way, by promiſing him life* *. But were they to pray, not for particular perſons, as they do, but only in general for all that are there, where is the command, where is even the permiſſion for it? Our brethren on earth we pray for, becauſe the time of their trial is not yet over; but the ſtate of the dead is fixed, and they ſhall receive, every man, not according to our prayers, but their own paſt works. Purgatory, they tell us, is that priſon whence men ſhall not come out *till they have paid the laſt farthing*: and what room is there then for our prayers for them there? We own indeed ſome ſort of prayers for the dead were uſed by the church (though without any warrant for them that appears) very early, within 200 years after Chriſt. But then originally theſe were made, not for ſouls in purgatory, for whom the Papiſts pray, but for ſaints in *Paradiſe*, for whom they do not pray; for all righteous perſons deceaſed, prophets, apoſtles, martyrs, even for the bleſſed virgin herſelf: and hence it appears by the way, that they did not pray to theſe ſince they prayed for them. And the ſubject-matter of their prayers was, that God would grant them his promiſed mercy in the day of judgment, and ſpeedily complete their happineſs in body and ſoul. In proceſs of time, it muſt be owned, men fell into a variety of groundleſs ſuppoſitions, concerning the ſtate of Chriſtians between death and the reſurrection; and upon theſe ſuppoſitions they formed their prayers, which many perſons went ſo far as to imagine could benefit even ſinners in hell. But as all theſe ſuppoſitions, for a long time, were different from, and inconſiſtent with, the *Romiſh* notions of

* Ezek. xiii. 22.

of purgatory, ſo the prayers which the ancients uſed for the dead, even were they of authority (which they are not, for nothing is ſo but what appears to come from God), would condemn, and not juſtify thoſe prayers which the Papiſts uſe.

Another Popiſh method of relieving ſinners is by indulgences. Originally this word meant a very right thing, the mitigation of the ſeverity or length of eccleſiaſtical cenſures towards ſuch, as, by an exemplary repentance, had deſerved it. Nor was any other ſort of indulgences known for at leaſt 600 years, perhaps much longer. But the preſent notion of the church of *Rome* about them (though in their diſputes with us they would fain diſguiſe it if they could), is this: Many of the ſaints, it ſeems, having not only done enough to merit immediate entrance into heaven, but more than was neceſſary for that purpoſe; this overplus of their goodneſs, called uſually works of ſupererogation, joined with the infinite merits of Chriſt, makes a treaſure of ineſtimable value, which the church hath the diſpoſal of, and the Pope, as head of the church, applies towards the remiſſion of their ſins, who either fulfil in their lifetime certain conditions appointed by him, or whoſe friends will fulfil them after their deaths. Now we, on the contrary, have learnt from ſcripture, that in many things the beſt of us all offend; that, were our obedience perfect, it were no more than our duty; and that to the grace of God, not to the merit of our works, the ſalvation of our ſouls is owing. In ſome reſpects indeed, in uſeleſs mortifications and obſervances of no value, we acknowledge many ſaints of their church have done much more than God requires, much more than he approves or will reward. But even had they done more really good things than they were obliged to do, this might indeed increaſe their own happineſs in another world: but what pretence is there for affirming, that inſtead of that it ſhall be transferred away to the benefit of others, and thoſe others juſt whomſoever the Pope ſhall pleaſe? This ſure is very hard. But after all, what is the benefit conferred by theſe indulgences? If it be only deliverance, either wholly or in part, from purgatory, there is no ſuch place to be delivered from; and that it is from hell, they dare not ſay indeed, but they do every thing that can make the ignorant think it. Why elſe are Chriſt's merits mentioned as one ground of indulgences?

dulgences? For he hath not merited, they tell us, deliverance from temporary puniſhments, as purgatory is, but from eternal ones only. Why alſo do their indulgences declare themſelves to beſtow the moſt full remiſſion and forgiveneſs of all ſins, if they mean only the ſmalleſt part of forgiveneſs? Theſe things are too plainly calculated to deceive poor wretches into a fatal belief, that, by ſuch methods, wickedneſs here may become conſiſtent with happineſs hereafter. Repentance indeed is, in words, made one condition of obtaining theſe indulgences; but this is eaſily explained away, or overlooked amongſt the others joined with it, of ſaying ſo many prayers, going to ſo many proceſſions, and paying ſo much money. Nay, if their own hiſtorians are to be credited, the inhabitants of whole cities at once, upon viſiting certain churches, and paying a certain ſum, have, before now, been abſolved of all their ſins by the Pope, with theſe very words added, *even though they had not been contrite for them, nor confeſſed them.* But as the reformation was firſt brought on by the enormities of indulgences, ſo, ſince the reformation, they have in many places, both in this and other reſpects, greatly moderated their practices, though they have never effectually diſclaimed their principles. And indeed, as angry as they are with that happy event, they have great reaſon to be thankful for it, on account of ſeveral changes for the better which it has produced amongſt them, eſpecially where part of any country have been Proteſtants: for elſewhere all their abuſes are kept up. And for one proof of it, I have now in my cuſtody a plenary indulgence, granted for a ſmall piece of gold at *Rome* this very year * to an abſolute ſtranger, for himſelf, for his kindred to the third degree, and to thirty perſons more, for whoſe names a proper blank is left in the inſtrument. So that had not the reformation given them ſome check, God knows whether, by this time, Chriſtianity had been diſcoverable under the changes and diſguiſes which the prevailing part of them would have deformed it with. Conſider but to what lengths matters had already gone, in this one article of the remiſſion of ſins. The neceſſity of confeſſion put the ſecrets of every man's heart and life into the breaſt

* 1745.

breaſt of the prieſt; and the power of admitting into heaven, or excluding from it, forced the bigotted ſinner to do whatever ſhould be enjoined him. In how monſtrous a manner this power was uſed, the hiſtories of all nations dreadfully ſhew. Add then to preſerve it from growing quite intolerable, an artifice was added that made it ſtill more fatal. It is too well known that mankind will do any thing rather than their duty, and part with any thing ſooner than their vices. On the terms therefore of ſubmitting in other points, they were made eaſy in this favourite one. The ſtricteſt rules of life indeed were laid down for ſuch as thought themſelves bound to be ſtrict; but for thoſe who deſired to be otherwiſe, ſuperſtitious obſervances were allowed to take place of real duties; idle penances to ſtand inſtead of true repentance and reformation: without a zeal for ſuch follies as theſe, the beſt man was reckoned to have but ſmall hope of future happineſs; and with a zeal for the notions and intereſts of holy church, the worſt man was eaſily ſecured from future miſery. Abſolution, if he were but ever ſo little ſorry for having been a ſinner, would ſet him clear at once from hell; and, if he had but either time to perform a few ſilly devotions and mortifications while he lived, or money to purchaſe a good many prayers for him when he died, his confinement in purgatory muſt ſoon be over: and thus was the neceſſity of a holy life quite taken away, and the goſpel of Chriſt altogether made void. Far be it from us of this church to affright you with ſuch vain terrors, or deceive you with ſuch vain hopes. On the contrary, be aſſured that were all the prieſts on earth to refuſe abſolving a true penitent, it would never hurt him; and were they all to join in abſolving a man, that hath not repented as the goſpel requires, it would do him no good. Be aſſured that no equivalent in the world will be accepted inſtead of true inward piety, nor all the good works of all the ſaints in heaven compenſate, in the leaſt degree, for the want of good works in any one man on earth. Never be moved then by the moſt confident pretences of this kind, but know, for a certainty, that whoever flies for refuge from his ſins to thoſe who will flatter him with ſuch wretched expedients as theſe, inſtead of mending his condition, by truſting to them, only makes it worſe and more deſperate than it was

before. The words of God, in the caſe of the *Iſraelites*, are juſt as applicable in this: *Becauſe ye have ſaid, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement, when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falſehood have we hid ourſelves: Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Your covenant with death ſhall be diſannulled, and your agreement with hell ſhall not ſtand: when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through, then ſhall ye be trodden down by it. Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteouſneſs to the plummet; and the hail ſhall ſweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters ſhall overflow the hiding place* *.

Ye therefore, beloved, to conclude with the words of St. *Peter, ſeeing ye know theſe things, beware, leſt being led away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt* †. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

* Iſ. xxviii. 15, 17, 18. † 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

SER-

SERMON CI.

The Sacred Scriptures the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.

1 Pet. v. 12.

——Exhorting and teſtifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand.

After fixing the rule of Chriſtian faith and practice, I proceeded to compare with this rule the chief things which diſtinguiſh the church of *Rome* from ours. Great numbers of theſe I have already conſidered, and ſhall now, for your fuller ſatisfaction, go on to ſome others.

Several of their notions concerning the pardon of ſin I have mentioned and confuted; but there ſtill remains one more to be ſpoken of; their cuſtom, when a ſick perſon is near death, of anointing his eyes, and ears, and noſtrils, and mouth, and hands, ſometimes alſo his feet and reins, with oil conſecrated by the biſhop, and praying, that in virtue of that anointing, the ſins which he hath committed, by the ſeveral organs of his body, may be forgiven him. This they call *Extreme Unction*, or the ſacrament of dying perſons; and teach, that, beſides forgiveneſs of ſins, it gives compoſure and ſtrength of mind to go through the agonies of death. All this they build wholly on the following paſſage of St. *James*. *Is any ſick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up; and if he have committed ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him* *. But a little conſideration will ſhew, that what

* James v. 14, 15.

St. *James* appoints is very different from what the church of *Rome* does. In thoſe days miraculous gifts were common; that of healing diſeaſes in particular: and the perſons who had theſe gifts were uſually the elders of the churches, whom the apoſtle here directs to be ſent for. And as miracles, in condeſcenſion to the genius of the *Jewiſh* people, to whom this epiſtle is directed, were accompanied, for the moſt part, with ſome outward act of ceremony by the performer of them (a practice which our Saviour himſelf often complied with), ſo the ceremony uſed in healing the ſick by miracle, *viz.* anointing them with oil, was one to which the *Jews* had been accuſtomed; oil being a thing of which much uſe was made in the eaſtern countries, on many occaſions *. Accordingly we read, that when our Saviour ſent out his diſciples with a power from heaven to cure diſeaſes, though he preſcribed to them no particular form for that purpoſe, yet they adopted this; *they anointed with oil many that were ſick, and healed them* †. Now what the evangeliſt tells us they did, is evidently the very thing which St. *James* directs the elders of the church to do. And therefore, ſince the anointing mentioned in the goſpel was only a mere circumſtance uſed in miraculous cures, that alſo mentioned in the epiſtles can be nothing more. Accordingly we find St. *James* neither appoints any conſecration of the oil, nor aſcribes any efficacy to it, as the Papiſts do, but ſays, *the prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick*. Now, if this means only prayer offered up in a general faith of God's providence, we uſe it for the ſick as well as they, and may hope for the ſame good effect from it. But faith, in many places of ſcripture, ſignifies that ſupernatural perſuaſion and feeling of a power to work miracles, which in thoſe days was frequent. Thus St. *Paul* ſays, *though I had all faith, ſo that I could remove mountains* ‡, &c. And therefore,

* See *Wheatley* on the Office for the Sick. And *Gratius*, on *Mark* vi. 13. ſays the *Jews* uſed it when they prayed for the ſick, to expreſs their hope of obtaining from God, in their behalf, that joy and gladneſs which oil ſignifies. *Preſervative againſt Popery*, Tit. vii. c. ii. § 4. p. 62.

† Mark vi. 13. The council of *Trent* had at firſt ſaid that extreme unction was inſtituted in this place, but afterwards changed that word for *inſinuated*. *F. Paul.* in *Preſerv.* p. 64.

‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 2. See alſo Matt. xvii. 20. John xiv. 12, 13.

fore, *the prayer of faith*, ſince it is ſo abſolutely promiſed here that it *ſhall ſave the ſick*, probably means, a prayer proceeding from this extraordinary perſuaſion and impulſe; ſuch a one as, in the next verſe, we tranſlate *an effectual fervent prayer*, but ſhould tranſlate an *inwrought* or *inſpired prayer*. And therefore unleſs, in the church of *Rome*, the prieſt, as often as he adminiſters extreme unction, acts and prays by immediate inſpiration, his prayers are not of the ſort St. *James* ſpeaks of, nor are they directed to the ſame end. The benefit which he promiſes from the prayers that he appoints, is the recovery of health; *The prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up:* whereas they of the church of *Rome* never uſe this ceremony with any hope of recovery, nor indeed, unleſs they happen to miſtake, till the perſon is quite paſt recovery. And, for this reaſon again, his anointing and theirs are quite different things. For though St. *James* does add, *And if he hath committed ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him*, yet the very doubt, implied in the word *if*, ſhews he is not ſpeaking of a ſacrament inſtituted purpoſely for the remiſſion of ſins, as the church of *Rome* make their unction to be. And indeed this relates to the very ſame thing with his former words. For, as bodily ſickneſs and infirmity was frequently a puniſhment for ſin (whence, to mention no other proofs, St. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians* *, *For this cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep*), ſo the very form of miraculouſly healing a perſon of theſe infirmities, uſed by our Saviour, is, *Son, thy ſins be forgiven thee* †; that is, the illneſs inflicted on thee for thy ſins is removed. Since therefore St. *James* promiſes forgiveneſs of ſins in juſt a like caſe, we are certainly to underſtand him in juſt the like ſenſe, *viz.* that if the ſickneſs of any perſon prayed for were the puniſhment of any ſin, that puniſhment ſhould be remitted, and his health reſtored. Now this forgiveneſs of the temporal puniſhment of ſome particular ſins, which is what St. *James* promiſes, the church of *Rome* does not promiſe from this ceremony; and the forgiveneſs of the future puniſhment of all thoſe ſins, that the ſick perſon hath ever committed by his bodily organs, which St. *James* does not promiſe,

* 1 Cor. ix. 30. † Matt. ix. 2. See alſo John v. 14.

promiſe, they do: though indeed it is a little hard to conceive, when all a man's ſins have been already forgiven (as they ſay they are, by the prieſt's abſolution), how any of them ſhould want to be forgiven again, perhaps by extreme unction, the moment after. But the truth is, they themſelves lay not near ſo much ſtreſs on this ceremony's procuring pardon of ſin, as its procuring compoſure of mind againſt the terrors of death. Now moſt evidently this expectation St. *James* hath not ſaid one word to countenance: ſo that his precept, which ſeems, at firſt ſight, to be ſome ground for their practice, and is the only ground they have, relates indeed to a quite different thing, as one of their cardinals, *Cajetan* *, acknowledges: though the council of *Trent*, ſeſſ. 14. hath thought proper ſince to curſe all that ſhall ſay it. The anointing preſcribed by St. *James* therefore, being entirely of a miraculous nature, was in all reaſon to ceaſe when miracles were no more. And accordingly the primitive Chriſtians, though they ſpeak more than once of anointing with oil in miraculous cures, yet, in common caſes, never mention it as a cuſtom, much leſs as one appointed in ſcripture, for the firſt 600 years †. After that indeed, they came to uſe it upon all ſick perſons in the beginning of ſickneſs, for a means of recovery, as the *Greek* church doth yet; till, finding it of little benefit in that way, the church of *Rome*, about the 12th century, began to uſe it in the extremity of ſickneſs, as a ſacrament of preparation for death; which, if it were in reality, they are ſurely much to blame for not giving it under the apprehenſions of an approaching violent death; for inſtance, before a malefactor is executed, where it cannot but be as needful as in the fears of a natural one. Upon the whole, you ſee our laying aſide a ceremony which hath long been uſeleſs, and, by leading perſons into ſuperſtitious fancies, might be hurtful, can be no manner of loſs, whilſt every thing that continues truly valuable in St. *James's* direction is preſerved in our office for viſiting the ſick; concerning which, I ſhall only add, that it is much to be wiſhed men would ſo live

* *Preſervative*, Tit. vii. c. 2. § 2. p. 60.

† Concerning a paſſage of *Innocent* I. in the beginning of the 5th century. See *Preſerv.* p. 75.

live in the time of their health, as to need the leaſt ſpiritual aſſiſtance that is poſſible, in the time of their ſickneſs; and that what they do need, they would all apply for early, when it might be of great benefit to them, and not content themſelves with calling in the miniſter at laſt for mere form's ſake, when he can do them little good, or none.

Another point in which we differ from the church of *Rome* is, that all their public prayers are in the *Latin* tongue, ours in our own. This ſure at leaſt is no hereſy, that, when we pray to God, we all know what we ſay. Our practice juſtifies itſelf: but how is theirs juſtified? Reaſon and common ſenſe plainly condemn it. Antiquity is no leſs againſt them; for every Chriſtian church originally had their own ſervice in their own tongue. That of the weſtern world was in *Latin*, only becauſe *Latin* was their common language: and therefore it ſhould have been no longer in *Latin*, when that ceaſed to be their common language. And for ſcripture, read but the 14th chapter of 1 *Corinthians*, and ſee what St. *Paul* would have judged of this *Romiſh* practice. Even when there was a miraculous gift of tongues in the church, and men prayed or prophefied, in ſtrange languages, by inſpiration, even then he requires ſuch perſons to keep ſilence, unleſs another were ready to interpret publicly what they ſpoke: for, ſays he, *Brethren, except ye utter words eaſy to be underſtood, how ſhall it be known what is ſpoken? for ye ſhall ſpeak into the air. If I know not the meaning of the voice, I ſhall be unto him that ſpeaketh a Barbarian, and he that ſpeaketh ſhall be a Barbarian unto me. How ſhall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned ſay Amen, at thy giving of thanks, ſeeing he underſtandeth not what thou ſayeſt? I thank my God I ſpeak with tongues more than you all: yet in the church, I had rather ſpeak five words with my underſtanding, that by my voice I might teach others alſo, than ten thouſand words in an unknown tongue.* It immediately follows, and very fitly to the preſent purpoſe: *Brethren, be not children in underſtanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in underſtanding be men.* For never ſure was greater *childiſhneſs*, than to be ſatisfied with the mere outward ſhew of prayers to God, perhaps without underſtanding one word of them, which is not praying at all; nor greater *malice*, that is, mere wicked and cruel cunning, than to keep the poor

poor people in this darkneſs, and plead for it with ſuch unfair pretences as they do. Some of them tell us very gravely, that *Latin*, far from being an unknown tongue, is the beſt known of any in *Europe*. And if it were, yet if this beſt known tongue is notwithſtanding unknown to ninety-nine perſons in a hundred, why muſt they all be confined to it, and not have each their own prayers in their own tongue? Why, that variety would be very inconvenient, they ſay, to travellers. But whoſe convenience is moſt to be conſulted? That of whole nations, or of a few perſons that come amongſt them occaſionally? But vulgar tongues, they ſay, are perpetually changing, and expreſſions growing improper and unintelligible. I anſwer, our having our bible and prayer-book in the vulgar tongue, undoubtedly prevents its changing near ſo faſt as it would otherwiſe. But when it does change, let them, where it is needful, be changed to it. For which is worſe, to take this little trouble of altering a few words and phraſes once in a hundred years, or to let people go on for ages together, with prayers and leſſons, of which they underſtand not one word? But they allege farther, that ſome of their prayers, indeed a great part of the maſs, it would be uſeleſs to have ſaid in their own language; for the prieſt is ordered to ſpeak it ſo low, that it cannot be heard; as if one fault would excuſe another, inſtead of making it greater. But many of their prayers, they ſay, may be underſtood; for though ſpoken in *Latin*, there are printed tranſlations of them in *Engliſh*. But ſtill great part of them is not tranſlated, unleſs it be by ſome very modern indulgence *; and that which is, nothing but our making them aſhamed of themſelves hath forced them to of late, in theſe parts of the world, againſt their will. For we know that when, within this laſt century, ſome well-meaning biſhops of their own church in *France*, had publiſhed the maſs in the vulgar tongue, for the people's uſe, the then Pope declared them ſons of perdition to all the world, and condemned what they had done, as if it were the overthrow

* The *Engliſh* tranſlator of the Order and Canon of the Maſs, hath omitted many of the ceremonies, particularly above twenty croſſes out of leſs than thirty. *Teniſon* on Idol. p. 5.

overthrow of religion *. So that, for aught we know, the ſame liberty taken here may fall under the ſame condemnation, when a proper time comes. Or were the contrary ever ſo certain, ſtill putting their prayers into *Engliſh* for the people, only ſhews that they ought to be ſpoken in *Engliſh* by the prieſt: for this round-about way is evidently a moſt abſurd one; that he ſhould be praying in one language, and they following him by gueſs, as well as they can, in another. Beſides, multitudes of their poor people have never heard of theſe tranſlations, or at leaſt have them not: multitudes more are unable to read them: and all theſe muſt be left quite in the dark. But we are told, they have a good intention in general: they reverence what they do not underſtand, and this is ſufficient. Now, for the purpoſes of ſpiritual dominion, this may be ſufficient: and ſuch devotions, as many of theirs are, will, we own, be more reverenced for not being underſtood: but for the edification of the people, it is far from being ſufficient, to have good intentions in general, and no meaning in particular: to pray to God for they know not what; and hear leſſons read, which they can learn nothing from.

Another thing akin to the former, in which we differ from the church of *Rome*, is, that we allow and exhort all perſons to read the holy ſcriptures diligently. They, on the contrary, have expreſsly decreed, that, ſince the promiſcuous allowance of bibles in the vulgar tongue does more harm than good (theſe are the very words of the index publiſhed in conſequence of the council of *Trent's* order), no one ſhall be ſuffered to read tranſlations of ſcripture, even though made by Catholics, as they call themſelves, unleſs the biſhop or inquiſitor, by the advice of the curate or confeſſor, give him leave in writing: and whoever tranſgreſſes this rule, ſhall not be abſolved till he gives up his bible. Nay, throughout the whole kingdom of *Spain*, all bibles in their own tongue are abſolutely forbidden. And in all Popiſh countries, getting one, by the means here preſcribed, being a matter of time, and form, and difficulty, and ſuſpicion, the generality ſeldom put themſelves to the trouble of it. So that in many parts

* Tillotſon, Serm. 246.

of the world there are great multitudes of that communion, who perhaps have never either read or heard, in their own tongue, one chapter of the Bible in their whole lives. Or if any one does aſk for leave, it is never granted, where they dare refuſe it, excepting to ſuch as they are well aſſured beforehand will ſee nothing there but what they are bidden. So that where they have permiſſion to read the ſcripture, they have none to underſtand it. Beſides that, this permiſſion, even in thoſe countries where they are obliged to indulge it the moſt freely, as in our own, is but during pleaſure, and may at any time be taken away when it will ſerve the turn better: nor dare the poor deluded people, upon pain of damnation, help themſelves. And as to Proteſtant tranſlations, having one is looked on as a mark of hereſy; for which, in this very nation, poor creatures have been burnt, and their bibles with them. Which practice now, think you, is the righter, theirs or ours? What authority can there be on earth to forbid any part of mankind from reading what heaven hath revealed to them? It is the law of our lives, the foundation of our hopes; God hath given it to us, and man hath no right to take it from us. But they tell us, it is from kindneſs they do it: for there is great danger that the ſcripture may be miſunderſtood and perverted: *unlearned and unſtable men* *, St. *Peter* hath declared, *may wreſt it to their own deſtruction.* Now this is poſſible indeed: and ſo it is poſſible every thing may be applied to an ill purpoſe: health, ſtrength, food, liberty, common day-light: but is this a reaſon for taking away any of them? It is poſſible that perſons may do themſelves harm by having the ſcriptures; but is it not ſomething more than poſſible, that they may ſuffer harm from the want of them; and *be deſtroyed*, as the prophet tells us, *for lack of knowledge* †? Why do not theſe perſons, who are ſo very cautious in this caſe, ſhew the ſame caution in others, which ſurely need it full as much? Why do they never reſtrain any body from image-worſhip, for fear of their falling into idolatry? Why do they never forbid the uſe of indulgences, for fear of their being miſtaken for a licence to ſin? Multitudes of queſtions like theſe might be with equal reaſon aſked: and it is very

* 2 Pet. iii. 16. † Hoſ. iv. 6.

very ſtrange, methinks, that they ſhould be ſuſpicious of nothing doing harm but the Bible. But after all, is the danger ſo very great? Hath God Almighty inſpired men to write and publiſh ſo exceedingly unſafe a book, and ſo very unfit to be read by the generality of thoſe for whom he intended it, that had not the church of *Rome*, in their great wiſdom, forbidden perſons to look into it, without their leave, it might have done infinite harm, and does not a little ſtill? We cannot think ſo. Men were liable to make an ill uſe of things, to fall into errors and hereſies, in all ages: yet neither the prophets under the Old Teſtament, nor our Saviour and his apoſtles in the times of the New, ever bethought themſelves of this way for preventing it; but recommend and enjoin the reading of ſcripture in the ſtrongeſt terms. Now it is wonderful they ſhould not be as wiſe as thoſe who come after them. St. *Peter* himſelf, who mentions this danger of men's *wreſting the ſcriptures*, yet does not in the leaſt blame, but ſuppoſe, every man's reading them notwithſtanding. And St. *Paul*, whoſe epiſtles were the very ſcriptures they wreſted, yet never requires them to be kept from any one Chriſtian of the ſeveral churches he writes to; nay, moſt ſtrictly requires the contrary, concerning an epiſtle as liable to be miſunderſtood as any of them all, and which actually was miſunderſtood immediately; I mean his firſt epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*. Yet notwithſtanding that, *I charge you by the Lord*, ſays he, *that this epiſtle be read unto all the holy brethren* *. Did then the ancient Chriſtians, in whoſe days there were hereſies in great plenty, did they reſtrain any of the people from reading the ſcriptures, in order to preſerve them from hereſy? No: the *Romaniſts* do not pretend it. They well know, that a man's delivering up his Bible was always, as it ought to be, the mark of apoſtaſy from religion. They know there is no one thing almoſt ſo much inſiſted on by fathers and councils, as the neceſſity that all perſons, without exception, ſhould be well acquainted with the word of God. Thus little apprehenſive was the primitive church of any danger from this practice. The church of *Rome*, we own, has ſome cauſe to be apprehenſive. For had the people once ge-

* 1 Theſſ. v. 27.

neral liberty to read and judge from ſcripture, there is great danger they might come in general to ſee, what now they who do ſee dare not own, how widely it differs from the doctrines commonly taught them. We acknowledge then they are *wiſe in their generation.* The ſcripture is againſt them, and they will be againſt the ſcripture: lower its credit as far as they dare: keep it out of mens hands where they can; and where they cannot, they pervert it by falſe tranſlations, obſcure it by falſe gloſſes, and *make it of none effect*, by ſetting up a pretended authority of interpreting it to quite another thing than it evidently means. We, God be thanked, need not theſe arts, and we uſe them not. We permit, we beſeech, we require you all to read the ſcriptures diligently, and judge of their meaning impartially; to compare with them every thing we teach you, and believe nothing but what you find agreeable to them. We have no fear of your being poiſoned by the food of life, or led into error by the word of truth. On the contrary, we know not any ſurer way of preſerving men from errors, and thoſe of the church of *Rome* in particular, than that which St. *Paul* preſcribes *Timothy*, in the third chapter of his ſecond epiſtle. *This know, that in the laſt days perilous times ſhall come. Evil men and ſeducers ſhall wax worſe and worſe, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in thoſe things which thou haſt learned, and haſt been aſſured of, knowing of whom thou haſt learned them: and that from a child thou haſt known the holy ſcriptures, which are able to make thee wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus. All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works.*

There are ſtill many other points, in which great corruptions of the *Romiſh* church might be ſhewn you. Such is their equalling the apocryphal books to the canonical, which the ancient Chriſtians did not. Such is their modern addition of five new ſacraments to thoſe two which Chriſt appointed, and making the belief of this preciſe number eſſential to ſalvation; making alſo the prieſt's intention ſo neceſſary to the benefit of the ſacraments, that nobody ſhall be the better for them without it: a perſon baptiſed, for inſtance, ſhall be no

Chriſtian

Chriſtian notwithſtanding, if the prieſt had malice enough to deſign he ſhould not. Of the ſame bad tendency is their burying every part of religion under a load of rites and ceremonies, that turn it into outward ſhew, and giving it the appearance of art magic, by an infinity of abſurd ſuperſtitions, many of them the undeniable remains of Heatheniſm very little diſguiſed; their engaging ſuch multitudes of people in vows of celibacy and uſeleſs retirement from the world; their obliging them to ſilly auſterities and abſtinences, of no real value, as matters of great merit; their exceſſive veneration of relics, moſt of them fictitious and unfit to be thus honoured, were they ever ſo genuine; their inventions of romantic legends and lying miracles, which make weak and unlearned perſons believe any thing; and too many of thoſe, who ſee through them, believe nothing. And beſides theſe and other errors in ſpiritual matters, there are many more of moſt weighty conſideration in temporals, which they zealouſly maintain; their claim of puniſhing whom they pleaſe to call heretics with penalties, impriſonments, tortures, death; their excommunicating and depoſing kings; their forbidding divine worſhip through whole nations at once; their annulling the moſt ſacred promiſes and engagements, when made to the prejudice of their church; their drawing, by wicked artifices, the wealth of all countries to the ſupport of their own tyranny. But many of theſe things I have ſet in a proper light to you on other occaſions, and dwelling on all would be endleſs, as well as unneceſſary. Enough, I hope, hath been ſaid to ſhew you which are in the right; and that *this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand.* For obſerve; as the whole claim of the church of *Rome* depends upon her being in all points infallible, ſo, if in any ſingle point ſhe proves to be miſtaken, her pretence of being believed in the reſt falls entirely to the ground. But indeed, though for your fuller ſatisfaction I have confuted many of her doctrines, yet any perſon may have ſufficient ſatisfaction of his own being in the right way, without ſo much as knowing or having heard what any one of her doctrines is. For let him but keep cloſe to the creed and the commandments; believe thoſe things which ſcripture hath made neceſſary to be believed; and do thoſe things which ſcripture hath made neceſſary to be done;

and he is under no manner of obligation to inquire, what any church on earth thinks fit to believe or do beſides. Many opinions may be true and uſeful; many practices may be innocent and edifying; but nothing can be matter of neceſſity, except what Chriſt and his apoſtles have required as terms of ſalvation. Every perſon, that complies with theſe, is a true Chriſtian; every church that teaches theſe, is a true church: and neither ignorance nor error, about any other matters, can forfeit our title to everlaſting life. Search then the ſcriptures and ſee: is there any one thing made neceſſary there which our church forbids? Is there any one thing declared ſinful there which our church requires? If not, let other churches prohibit or enjoin as they pleaſe at their own peril. We are no way bound to inquire what they do, or why. Letting alone their peculiarities, we are ſure is ſafe. Whether making uſe of them be or not, is their buſineſs to conſider, not ours. So that were tranſubſtantiation, for inſtance, and purgatory true; were the worſhip of images and praying to ſaints lawful, which, God knows, they are far from being; yet as there is no pretence that they are neceſſary doctrines and practices, the miſtake of rejecting them could have no harm in it; but the uncharitableneſs of condemning and accurſing thoſe who reject them may have great harm. For when once Chriſt hath ſaid, believe and do ſuch and ſuch things, and you ſhall be ſaved; who is it that ſhall dare to ſay, believe and do more, or you ſhall not be ſaved? It is dreadful arrogance, therefore, which the church of *Rome* ſhews in this reſpect; coining new articles of faith, ſome of which they own were not articles of faith from the beginning; and ſentencing men to hell for not believing what, before that ſentence, themſelves acknowledge nobody was bound to believe. This, you ſee, is changing the terms of the Chriſtian covenant arbitrarily, and making a new goſpel at their own pleaſure. But in oppoſition to their deciſions and *anathemas*, hear one of St. *Paul*: *Though an angel from heaven preach any other goſpel unto you than that which we*, the apoſtles of Chriſt, *have preached, let him be accurſed.* Truſt then yourſelves on this foot: for *other foundation can no man lay, than that which they laid* *. Nor indeed did the primitive church, for

* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

for ſeveral hundreds of years, attempt it, or make any doctrine neceſſary which we do not, as the learned well know from their writings, and the unlearned may know from the moſt ancient of their creeds, which we now uſe in our conſtant ſervice. Afterwards indeed needleſs additions firſt crept in, then falſe ones: but, had they begun ever ſo much ſooner, our cauſe had received no prejudice. *To the law and to the teſtimony*, as the prophet directs, we appeal: *if they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them* *.

* Iſ. viii. 20.

SERMON CII.

The Sacred Scriptures the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Practice.

1 Pet. v. 12.

——*Exhorting and teſtifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye ſtand.*

I COME now to conclude the ſubject on which I have been ſo long employed. A ſufficient number of the doctrines of the *Romaniſts* have been conſidered, and what they plead for them examined. But beſides the pleas they make for each in particular, they have others for all in general. Should they, when they want to make a convert, fairly propoſe to him each of their notions ſeparately, and give him proofs, firſt that it is true, and then that it obliges him to quit our communion for theirs; this, they are ſenſible, would be a hopeleſs undertaking: and therefore, very wiſely, they are for ſhorter work; and have general arguments, it ſeems, to prove that, let their doctrines or ours be what they will, we muſt be in the wrong, and they in the right.

One of theſe arguments is their infallibility; but this, I hope, was fully confuted in my firſt diſcourſe, and indeed in every one ſince. For it is in vain for them to pretend they cannot be miſtaken, if it appear but in any ſingle inſtance that they are.

Another is, that *Proteſtants*, not being of the *Roman* church, are not of the catholic church; for the catholic church is but one, and, out of it, there is no ſalvation. Now, we acknowledge it is but one body under one head, Chriſt Jeſus; but then in this one body there are many members; and why are not the churches of *Greece*, *Aſia*, and *Africa*; why is not ours

as

as true a member of it as theirs? On what authority, if names were worth diſputing about, do they ingroſs that of *Catholic* to themſelves? Do not we profeſs the true catholic faith, that faith which the univerſal church received from the apoſtles? We profeſs it much purer than they. Are the ſacraments more duly adminiſtered by them than by us? Far from it: For of the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, one half they have taken away from the laity; and concerning the other half, they have taught the moſt monſtrous abſurdities, and built on them the moſt ſhocking idolatry. Then, for that of baptiſm, we adminiſter it with water alone, juſt as Chriſt appointed, whereas they have added oil, ſalt, ſpittle, and I know not what, as if it were on purpoſe to make it as unlike his inſtitution as they can. Is then the appointment or ordination of their clergy more valid or more regular than ours? On no account whatever. For if they brought down the ſucceſſion uninterrupted to the reformation, we have certainly preſerved it uninterrupted ſince; which now they may be aſhamed to deny, ſince a learned man of their own communion hath fully proved it. And conſequently, for them, who are but a very unſound part of the catholic church, to call themſelves the whole of it, is quite as abſurd as for a diſeaſed limb (though perhaps the larger for being diſeaſed), to be called the whole body. But they will ſay, we ſeparated, and ſo cut off ourſelves from the catholic church at the reformation. I anſwer, we did not. We only caſt out, as was our duty, the errors that were crept in; and we did it by the lawful authority of our ſuperiors, both eccleſiaſtical and civil. Upon which the church of *Rome*, inſtead of imitating our good example, commanded all they could influence to quit our communion. It is they then who made the ſeparation, and it is they that continue it. We are ready ſtill to join in communion with them, upon the terms of the goſpel; and they refuſe to join with us, but upon terms of their own deviſing. Now, when two churches break communion with one another, though it is always a fault, yet it does not always follow, that either of them is thereby broken off from the catholic church, any more than it follows, that when two men break off acquaintance, one of them is broken off from the civil ſociety to which they belong. But when one church

ſhall excommunicate another, merely becauſe the governors of that other made ſuch alterations in it as ſcripture warrants, and becauſe the people complied with thoſe alterations, ſuch an inſtance of preſumption and uncharitableneſs is much more likely to cut off thoſe that uſe it from the church of Chriſt, than thoſe againſt whom it is uſed. But ſuppoſing we had even acted without, and ſeparated from, our church governors, as our Proteſtant brethren abroad were forced to do, was there not a cauſe? When the word of God was hidden from men, and his worſhip performed in an unknown tongue; when pernicious falſehoods were required to be profeſſed, and ſinful terms of communion to be complied with; when church authority, by ſupporting ſuch things as theſe, became inconſiſtent with the ends for which it was eſtabliſhed; what remedy was there but to throw it off, and form new eſtabliſhments? If in theſe there were any irregularities, they were the faults of thoſe who forced men into them; and are of no conſequence, in compariſon with the reaſon that made a change neceſſary. For were a man to ſeparate himſelf from every church he knows on earth, in order to obey the laws of Chriſt, he would ſtill be a moſt valuable member of that *general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, that are written in heaven*.* *For what communion hath light with darkneſs? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty* †.

But it is an article of faith, they tell us, that the church of *Rome* is the mother and miſtreſs of all churches; and therefore to caſt off her authority, can never be lawful. We anſwer, the mother of all churches ſhe certainly is not. For in *Jeruſalem* was the firſt Chriſtian ſociety, and from thence were derived many others, more ancient than that of *Rome*. Nor was that church the mother of the *Britiſh* churches, nor of all the *Engliſh*. But had the firſt perſons, that founded the goſpel here, been ſent from *Rome*, that had given them no manner of authority over us. Whence is ſhe then the miſtreſs?

* Heb. xii. 23. † 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16, 17, 18.

trefs? Why, St. *Peter* was head of the church, and the biſhops of *Rome* are his ſucceſſors. But the ſcripture tells us, *Chriſt is head of the church* *, and tells us of no other. We own it was ſaid to St. *Peter*, *Upon this rock will I build my church* †. But this rock, for aught they can ever prove, might be, not St. *Peter's* perſon, but his confeſſion made immediately before, that *Jeſus was the Chriſt*. Or, if the church was to be built on St. *Peter*, yet not on him alone, but *upon the foundation of all the apoſtles and prophets*, as St. *Paul* teaches expreſsly ‡. And accordingly, *the wall of the new Jeruſalem*, or church of God, is ſaid to *have twelve foundations*, on which were *the names of the twele apoſtles of the Lamb* §. To St. *Peter* indeed it was promiſed, *that the keys of the kingdom of heaven ſhould be given him*, and that *whatever he bound or looſed on earth, ſhould be bound or looſed in heaven* ‖. But this very ſame, and other as great things, are ſaid to all the apoſtles equally ¶. St. *Peter* was appointed by Chriſt to *feed his ſheep* **; but ſo ſurely was every one of them. The firſt rank therefore he might have among the apoſtles, but authority over them not the leaſt. On the contrary, St. *Paul* tells us, that *he withſtood St. Peter to the face, becauſe he was to be blamed* ††: and ſays of himſelf, in two different places, that he was *in nothing behind, not a whit behind, the very chiefeſt apoſtles* ‡‡. But had St. *Peter* poſſeſſed ever ſo much authority, what is that to the church of *Rome*? Why, St. *Peter* was biſhop of *Rome*. But even this is what they can never prove, nor is it probable. Or if he was, perhaps it was only of the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians at *Rome*. For St. *Paul* tells us, *the goſpel of the uncircumciſion was committed to him, and that of the circumciſion to Peter* §§; and the *Jewiſh* church there is extinct. Or if biſhop of all *Rome*, he was biſhop, they ſay, alſo of *Antioch*; and why muſt their church inherit his authority more than that church? But why indeed muſt it be inherited at all? It was given perſonally to St. *Peter* as an apoſtle: what had others to do with it who were no apoſtles, though they did ſucceed him as biſhops?

* Eph. i. 22. iv. 15. † Matth. xvi. 18. ‡ Eph. ii. 20. § Rev. xxi. 14.
‖ Matt. xvi. 19. ¶ Matt. xviii. 18. John xx. 23. ** John xxi. 15, 16, 17.
†† Gal. ii. 11. ‡‡ 1 Cor. xi. 5. xii. 11. §§ Gal. ii. 7.

ſhops? All pre-eminence of one church above another was nothing originally, but an inſtitution of men for convenience and order. *Rome* being the chief city in the world, it was natural to look on the biſhop of *Rome* as the chief biſhop. And precedence being thus allowed them, by time and opportunity, and arts that were often very wicked ones, they improved it into a claim of authority; to which, though not near the whole church ever ſubmitted, yet at length a great part did. Then to the prerogative, of which they had thus by degrees got poſſeſſion, they began to pretend Chriſt himſelf had originally given them a right. And having managed ſo well, that part of the world believed them, and part durſt not contradict them, they took on them the title of univerſal biſhops, which one of themſelves not long before had declared, whoever ſhould take, was the forerunner of Antichriſt. And then, under this, they claimed all power over the ſouls, bodies, and fortunes of men, and exerciſed it with all poſſible inſolence, rapaciouſneſs, cruelty and impiety.

Now what could there be done, when ſuch a power was thus acquired, and thus exerciſed, but to throw it off, and aſſert that liberty to which we had an undoubted right? For as to any ſcheme of coming to terms, never did the church of *Rome* recede from any one pretenſion ſhe ever made. The exerciſe of authority ſhe hath omitted indeed, whenever ſhe durſt not exerciſe it; but all her claims ſhe hath conſtantly kept up, and excommunicates yearly, to this day, every prince in *Chriſtendom*, that ſhall refuſe obedience to any conſtitution of the Pope's whatever. It is true, even the *Popiſh* princes at preſent regard not this excommunication, and ſhe knows not how to make them regard it. But were once the *Proteſtants* reunited to that church, on the terms of allowing her any ſuperiority, who knows how ſoon a power, that had once riſen from nothing to that formidable height which it had attained, may riſe again to be as formidable as ever?

Another of their pleas is this: That which was the ancient religion and church muſt be the true one. Now where was your church, ſay they, before *Henry* the VIII.? Where was your religion before *Luther?* We anſwer, our church was before that time juſt where it is now, only then it was corrupted with many ſinful errors, from which it is now reformed.

formed. Still it is the ſame church it was before; juſt as a man formerly addicted to many vices, and afflicted with many diſtempers, continues the ſame man, after he hath forſaken the one, and recovered from the other; and it would be very ſtrange to make his alteration for the better an objection againſt him. And for our religion, where was that before *Luther?* Why, wherever Chriſtianity was. Did *Luther* invent the creed, the ten commandments, the two ſacraments? Theſe are the things in which our religion conſiſts, and theirs conſiſts in the ſame; only they have added by degrees a number of needleſs, falſe, and wicked things to them, which we have caſt off again. Our religion therefore is the ancient Chriſtianity, profeſſed from the days of the apoſtles. But where was their religion in thoſe days, I mean the doctrines in which they differ from us? All of them hundreds of years later; many of them a thouſand; ſome of them eſtabliſhed no longer ago than the council of *Trent*, which is ſince the time of *Luther*. For then, and not before, was it, that they filled up the meaſure of their iniquities, which had long been growing; equalled their own traditions to the word of God; and added a new creed to the old one. Our rejecting their additional doctrines, we own, is new; and no wonder, for the doctrines themſelves are new. Some of them indeed reigned much too long: had they been rejected ſooner, it had been the better; but better late than never. Still, our denying theſe is no more part of our religion, properly ſpeaking, than our denying *Mahometaniſm*, or the idolatry of the *Chineſe*, is part of our religion. Were it not for their preſſing them upon us, our people ſhould never hear them mentioned. We take no pleaſure in expoſing their abſurdities, but are heartily grieved at them; and have much better employment for our hearers than theſe controverſies, did not their reſtleſs endeavours to pervert men make it ſometimes neceſſary.

But this plea of their church being the moſt ancient, they ſometimes put in a different form; and tell us, that either the *Romiſh* church eſtabliſhed here before the reformation was the church, or it was not. If it was, why do we proteſt againſt it? If it was not, how can ours be a true church, which is derived from it? The anſwer is very plain. In one reſpect, as their church profeſſed the fundamentals of Chriſtianity,

tianity, it was, and is a true church; and ſo far ours is derived from it. In another reſpect, as it obſcured and contradicted them by unjuſtifiable doctrines and practices, it was not a true church; and ſo far we proteſt againſt it. Their truths we have preſerved; their errors we have rejected. In one ſenſe we are the ſame church with them ſtill; in the other we are not the ſame, but a much better.

Another way which they have of arguing againſt the reformation, is aſperſing the characters of thoſe who were engaged in it, and aſcribing bad motives to them. Now, as to this, if the main thing done was right, as it plainly was, what ſort of inſtruments God employed in it, or what their perſonal inducements were, is of no conſequence to us in the leaſt. *Jehu* was an inſtrument of God in deſtroying *Baal* out of *Iſrael*, and executing vengeance on the houſe of *Ahab*, yet very wicked in ſome reſpects *. So was *Henry* the VIII. commendable in deſtroying the ſupremacy of the Pope, yet highly blameable in other things. The greateſt part of the reformers were very good men, and acted from the beſt of motives. Some of them had doubtleſs great faults, and might act from bad motives. Nay, ſuch as meant very well, might, in particular things, do very ill. For what conſtantly happened in all other caſes, no wonder if it happened in this. However, the moſt blameable were not near ſo bad as the malice of their adverſaries repreſents them; and had they been much worſe, yet they could ſcarce poſſibly be ſo bad as ſome of thoſe princes, and even of thoſe Popes were, who built up the Antichriſtian power, which theſe men demoliſhed.

But whatever becomes of this compariſon, ſtill, upon the whole, theirs is the church, they tell us, in which the moſt numerous and brighteſt inſtances of devotion, ſelf-denial, and good works, have ſhone forth, as the many hiſtories of their ſaints fully prove; ours is a low, carnal religion; moſt of our people are very bad; few or none of them eminently good; and that muſt be a good church which makes the beſt men. Now, the truth is, theſe magnified inſtances of piety of theirs, are moſt of them inſtances only of mere ſuperſtition, or blind zeal; and the ſaints which they have canonized, were, many of

* 2 Kings x. 28—31.

of them, very weak, and ſome of them very wicked perſons, whoſe lives are pompouſly dreſſed up in legends and fables, to amuſe and miſlead the ignorant. We, for our parts, leave them to make a noiſe with fanciful ways of being religious; and doubt not, but we pleaſe God much better by performing quietly the real duties of life. And, though we acknowledge and lament that a failure in theſe is too general amongſt us, yet we muſt remind them, when they inſult us upon this, that there is no where on earth more vile and more open wickedneſs, than where Popery reigns without controul. If, when they live under Proteſtant governments, they live in a more Chriſtian manner, we are glad of it: but ſtill we hope, even here, the lives of our people are not worſe than theirs; and we are ſure it is not the fault of our religion, if they are not much better.

But, they tell us, however theſe things may be, yet their communion is undoubtedly the ſafer of the two. For they ſay we cannot be ſaved, and we own they may be ſaved; and that church is plainly the ſafer, in which both ſides acknowledge ſalvation is to be had. But conſider, does their ſaying we are not ſafe, make us ever the leſs ſo in reality? The queſtion is, upon what grounds do they ſay it? Why, upon none at all, as I have ſhewn you. And therefore all they can prove by ſaying it, is their own confidence, of which thoſe perſons have generally the moſt, who have the leaſt reaſon for it: and their own uncharitableneſs, for which, if we at all underſtand Chriſtianity, no ſide will ever be the ſafer. Well, but we do not deny that they may be ſaved. No more do I, or they deny, but even a virtuous Heathen may have ſome degree of happineſs in another life. Suppoſe then he ſhould take it into his head to deny that a Chriſtian could, muſt I turn Heathen to be of the ſafer ſide? You ſee it is juſt the ſame caſe. But after all, do we lay it down as a rule, without exception, that all Papiſts may be ſaved? We dare not ſay ſo. Some of them go much more unjuſtifiable lengths than others: the ill things that many of them do, they do in ignorance; this, we hope, will be an excuſe for them in a great meaſure. Yet, even for the moſt ignorant, their ſalvation is grievouſly hazardous, amidſt ſo many corruptions, which, one ſhould think, even they might perceive to be

ſuch; and ſo many temptations to neglect that *holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord* *. The condition of the learned amongſt them, who, when the light is before their eyes, continue in darkneſs, and keep others in it, is ſtill more dangerous. But in the worſt ſtate of all are they, who being born *children of light*, return to darkneſs again, and ſin wilfully after they had been bred up amongſt us in the knowledge of the truth. Yet even among theſe there are very different degrees of guilt. Such, whoſe good meaning hath been miſled by plauſible artifices, we would ſtill hope well of; though doubtleſs they muſt have been ſinfully negligent of informing themſelves concerning the grounds of their firſt belief, elſe they had never left it. A ſecond ſort, who depart from what, in their conſciences, they believe is the truth, merely becauſe a preſumptuous man tells them, they cannot be ſaved if they adhere to it, theſe are much more blameworthy than the former. But for ſuch as, either for the love of worldly intereſt, or the wretched hope of reconciling ſin and ſalvation together, turn aſide from the way of righteouſneſs, and forſake that pure and holy communion, which the good providence of God hath placed them in; as to ſuch, we cannot judge favourably, and we will not judge hardly; *there is one that judgeth* †, *who will alſo render to every man according to his deeds* ‡: but indeed we can ſee no promiſe of their finding *mercy in that day*. Suffer not yourſelves then to be moved either by vain threatenings or falſe promiſes, nor ever think to be ſafe in any other way, than that of firſt inquiring carefully what your duty is, and then keeping cloſe to the practice of it. Be aſſured it is ſafe to worſhip God, through Jeſus Chriſt, and let all other worſhip alone; ſafe to receive the holy communion as our Lord himſelf gave it; to pray in a language you all underſtand; and make that holy word, *which was written for your learning* §, the foundation and rule of your faith, your practice, and your hopes. Fear not but you are ſafe in doing this, whether the *Romaniſts* be ſafe in doing otherwiſe or not. God grant they may! but God forbid that any of us ſhould try. Bear with me now but a few minutes longer, whilſt I give you, in concluſion, ſome

* Heb. xii. 14. † John viii. 50. ‡ Rom. ii. 6. § Rom. xv. 4.

ſome ſeaſonable directions for your behaviour towards thoſe of that church.

Firſt then, let none of their bad doctrines or practices ever tempt you in the leaſt to any hard treatment of them. Juſtice and mercy, equity and charity, are main parts of religion; and a failure in theſe is one of the worſt of hereſies into which we can fall. We know the church of *Rome* hath failed in them greatly; our anceſtors have felt their cruelty; our Proteſtant brethren abroad groan under it at this day; and may God preſerve us and our poſterity from the danger of it; for never had they mercy long when they had power. Careful ſelf-defence againſt ſuch a ſpirit muſt be allowed us; but, as to any thing farther, in thoſe things for which we blame them, let us not be like them. The ſevere laws we have in force againſt them, are not for their religious opinions, but for their refuſing to own, and promiſe due obedience to, the government under which they live; and they have long experience, that nothing but abſolute neceſſity will ever oblige our ſuperiors to put any of theſe laws into execution. Let us therefore ſhew, in our private capacities, the ſame good temper. As men, they have a title to all humanity; as Chriſtians, though miſtaken, they have a yet ſtronger claim to our forbearance and tenderneſs. Their doctrines indeed are dangerous; their practices have been dreadful; but this, in a great meaſure, hath ariſen from ignorance, and *a zeal of God, though not according to knowledge* *. Numbers of them, without doubt, inwardly diſapprove religious cruelties, and think at leaſt they could never be brought to join in them. However this may be (which God forbid ſhould ever come to be tried), yet, in the mean time, nothing hinders, but as in religion they may, to the beſt of their judgment, be ſincerely pious, ſo in common life they may be juſt and honeſt, friendly and neighbourly. Let us therefore, with much better-natured principles, be ſure not to appear worſe-natured perſons; but recommend our profeſſion to all the world, by that *wiſdom which is from above, firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits* †.

* Rom. x. 2. † James iii. 17.

In the next place, let nothing which hath been ſaid make thoſe, who are not ſome way called to it, over-forward to diſpute about theſe matters with perſons of more learning and art than themſelves. For a man may have very good reaſons on his ſide, and yet be ſo little qualified to ſet them in the beſt light, that an excellent cauſe may be hurt by want of ſkill in managing it. What I have endeavoured is only that you may *be able*, as St. *Peter* directs, *to give an anſwer to them that aſk you a reaſon of the hope that is in you* *. In doing which, remember you are concerned only to be on the defenſive. They are to prove, if they can, that every one of their doctrines is not only true, but an article of faith; and every one of their practices not only lawful, but neceſſary. Till they have done all this, you have no reaſon to change; and when they have done it, we allow you to change. But obſerve one thing; if you hear them deny any of the points with which they have been charged, do not be ſtaggered at it. Would to God they were not guilty of them! They would be more in the right, and we ſhould be never the leſs ſo. But do not think a charge unjuſt, becauſe they confidently ſay it is. The more ignorant of them here among us, perhaps, do not know the worſt part of their doctrines; and the more learned will not own them till they are forced. Theſe concealments are no new things with them. In ſome countries many of their miſſionaries have concealed a great part of the Chriſtianity they pretended to teach, and allowed Heatheniſm to be blended with it, in order to make converts, ſuch as they are, the more eaſily. No wonder then if here they veil over their corruptions with a fair maſk, which, if we do not pull off, they will not throw off, till the proper time comes.

Another thing is, if ever you ſhould be preſſed with any of their arguments which I have mentioned, and not perhaps remember the anſwer to it, ſtill remember you have heard it anſwered; and any one of you may, at any time when you deſire it, have the anſwer repeated and farther explained to you. Or if any other argument ſhould be uſed, to which you cannot of yourſelves reply, conſult thoſe that can; tell us your

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

your difficulties in time; be aſſured ſuch as would keep you from this, do not mean honeſtly; give us but a fair hearing before you determine to leave us, and we doubt not your ſtaying with us. Even if any of you ſhould be unhappily brought to think favourably of ſome of their doctrines, remember ſtill how monſtrous others of them are; and yet, if you do not ſwallow all, you have done nothing. We allow perſons to have very different opinions from us in ſome points, and ſuffer them to continue among us as very good Chriſtians notwithſtanding; but their church makes no abatement; their very groſſeſt errors muſt be profeſſed, or you are none of them. Think well then what you do; and, as I once adviſed before, never let ſubtlety and ſophiſtry, whether you know exactly how to anſwer it or not, prevail againſt ſcripture and reaſon; but ever ſtick to the plain word of God, and plain common ſenſe.

One direction more I have of the utmoſt importance; which is, if ever we would ſecure ourſelves to good purpoſe againſt the dangers of falſe religion, let us carefully promote the profeſſion and practice of the true. If perſons are bred up in no knowledge of, and no zeal for, the principles of their own church, no wonder that they are eaſily carried off and ſeduced into another. If they are encouraged to live without regard to God, many of them, however, will be afraid to die ſo too; and then that communion, which makes the largeſt promiſes of forgiveneſs on the eaſieſt terms, will be almoſt ſure to be embraced by them. Men, wiſe in their own imaginations, think they are ſure to root out ſuperſtition, if they plant infidelity. But mankind muſt, and will have ſome religion; and if they forſake a good one, ſooner or later the uncomfortableneſs of unbelief, and the terrors of conſcience after a wicked life, will drive moſt of them to a worſe. Beſides, whilſt we are divided and negligent about theſe matters, the emiſſaries of the church of *Rome* are united and active, and never with more ſanguine hopes, than when they can plead experience, that the liberty allowed by the Proteſtant religion leads men of courſe to throw off all religion. Theſe are plain reaſons for a public regard to piety and virtue; and there are yet more important ones for a private conſcientious practice of them; for that, after all, is the only thing that will eſta-

bliſh us in the truth, fill our hearts with peace and comfort in this life, and give us everlaſting happineſs in the next. If then you have any concern, either for the honour of that church to which you belong, for the welfare of your country, or the ſalvation of your ſouls, *let your converſation be as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt* *. Pity and pray for them who are in error, that God would *give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* †; *and building up yourſelves*, as St. *Jude* exhorts, *on your moſt holy faith, keep yourſelves in the love of God; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life* ‡.

Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wiſe God our Saviour be glory and majeſty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen §.

* Phil. i. 27. † 2 Tim. ii. 25. ‡ Jude, ver. 20, 21. § Jude, ver. 24, 25.

SER.

SERMON CIII.

The great Importance in Life of frequent Reflection and Self-examination.

HAGGAI, i. 5.

Now therefore, thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Conſider your ways.

THE faculty of reviewing our paſt lives, and the preſent ſtate of our hearts, in order to approve what is right, or condemn what is wrong in either, carries with it an evident obligation upon all men, to exerciſe it conſtantly and uprightly. It is a principle, that implies in its very nature an authority over the whole of our conduct; and we every one feel ourſelves moſt intimately bound to obey its dictates. Even when we doubt in particular how we are to act, we muſt know in general, that we are to act as truth and conſcience direct; and not to examine what they direct, or whether we are following it, or tranſgreſſing the firſt fundamental law of moral agents. So that indeed God our Maker ſaith to each of us continually, by the inward voice of our own breaſts, *Conſider your ways.* A precept univerſally acknowledged, and highly honoured, even by Heathens; but peculiarly enforced on Chriſtians, as it is not only often and ſolemnly enjoined in ſcripture, but, to ſecure all poſſible regard to it, ſelf-examination is incorporated into the moſt ſacred rite of our holy religion (participation of the bleſſed ſacrament,) as its vaſt importance well deſerved.

For in the midſt of ſo many paſſions and appetites as compoſe our frame; ſo many diſorders in it as we are born with; ſo many more as we have ſuperadded; ſuch powerful temptations as ſurround us on every ſide; we cannot hope, that the

the carefulleſt attention to ourſelves will keep us entirely free from faults; but without ſuch care, we ſhall fall into many more and worſe; we ſhall go much greater lengths in them; we ſhall continue the wrong conduct we have once begun, blind to its guilt and peril, or only quit one error to adopt another, till we fix ourſelves down in a confirmed ſtate of ſin and miſery. By a little neglect of culture, a ſoil ſo fruitful of ill weeds, will ſoon be covered with them; beſides, that the beſt inclinations of the beſt minds, if left to themſelves, will run wild and degenerate. And proportionally as perſons are more exempted from the free admonition of others, the more certainly and dangerouſly they muſt err, unleſs preſerved by a moſt vigorous uſe of their own ſelf-reflections.

A duty, thus plain and thus neceſſary, God will doubtleſs expect us to perform very faithfully. And what the Almighty commands, we ſhall always find it our intereſt to do, never to omit. When we have acted amiſs, indeed, we muſt feel pain in thinking of it. But it is pain in order to a cure, which health and eaſe will follow; whereas, the cowardice of not ſearching our wounds will inevitably make them fatal. In ſome of the moſt trifling affairs of life, we ſhould think it ſtrangely abſurd, not to obſerve what we are doing. But how vaſtly more is it ſo in the management of the whole of life; on which our happineſs or miſery depends, in time and to eternity!

We cannot bear, perhaps, to be ſo ſerious. But if we refuſe it, ſooner or later we ſhall aſſuredly be driven to it. And never have there been in the world poor creatures ſo dreadfully ſerious, as they who have reſolved to be always gay and thoughtleſs. Terrors of mind, pains of body, perplexity of affairs, have come to be their hourly companions, till, very often, life itſelf hath grown inſupportable to them, and they have deſperately broken out of it, and even that in vain. Here, or hereafter every one muſt think; will we then do it, while it may avail us; or, when it can only aggravate our ſufferings? Beſides, perſons of the greateſt levity are ſerious in ſome points; as earneſt as they are capable of being, about matters that very little deſerve it; and why not about the one thing needful?

But, poſſibly we are not convinced that our behaviour is of ſuch infinite and eternal importance. However, at leaſt, it is of importance to examine, whether it be or not. That inquiry can do us no harm; and it may do us good beyond conception.

But, perhaps, we have inquired, and think there is reaſon to doubt of what we are commonly taught concerning theſe matters. But when did we begin to think ſo? Was it before we had groſsly ſinned; or, however, were pretty much reſolved to ſin, and wanted to be made eaſy in it? Or was it not in conſequence of imagining, that an infidel way of thinking would give us a diſtinguiſhed and faſhionable air? If ſo, what chance was there, that our inquiry ſhould be a fair one? It is not picking up from others, or inventing ourſelves a few jeſts and cavils, or even real objections againſt religion, that entitles us to ſay we have examined it; but an impartial thorough ſearch into every thing, within our reach, favourable to it, as well as contrary. What authors then have we read, with what men of learning and abilities have we converſed on the religious ſide of the queſtion? And with what ſort of ſpirit have we done it? We have been caught, it may be, with ſomewhat that appears ridiculous. But may not every thing almoſt be made to appear ſo to a light mind? We have been ſhocked, perhaps, by more ſolid difficulties. But are there not ſuch in all parts of knowledge? Are there not much greater in what infidels believe, than what Chriſtians believe? Whoever looks cloſely into the matter, will find that their credulity, beyond compariſon, exceeds ours. Or, ſuppoſing, after ſome honeſt inquiry, we ſtill doubt; have we not often doubted long, of what at laſt we found true? Would we tamely give up our title to an eſtate, or an honour, becauſe a few ſuſpicions were ſtarted about it, that we could not immediately confute? And doth not our whole title, to no leſs than eternal felicity, ſtand and fall with our religion?

But further; what do we doubt of? Not ſurely of all the articles of faith, and all the obligations of life. Have we then conſidered well, what the undoubted ones are, and how far they ought to influence our conduct? Whenever we do, we ſhall certainly find, that no one part of it can ſafely be vicious; and, indeed, that there is not the leaſt firm ground to

ſtand

ſtand on, between uniform piety and morals, and uniform profligateneſs and villainy. If God and virtue are realities, we are bound to every thing which they require in every caſe. If they are not, we are bound to nothing in any caſe. Whoever then is ſhocked at the latter ſuppoſition, muſt take refuge in the former, and conſequently ſee it his duty, to weigh all his behaviour deliberately and impartially.

We find it but too eaſy, if we will, to judge very favourably of almoſt the worſt actions we have ever done. At leaſt, between diſguiſing them with falſe colours, and hurrying on to do and think of ſomewhat elſe, we can for the moſt part quiet, if not applaud ourſelves, eſpecially if others, above all, others of our own rank, are guilty of them without ſcruple. And even ſins that we thought heinous ones, when they were juſt committed, after ſome time we grow to imagine ſcarce worth notice; as if diſtance leſſened the reality of objects, as well as the appearance. But God ſees every thing in its true light and magnitude, and ſurely then it is our concern to ſee it ſo too. For what can it avail us, to imagine pleaſing falſehoods, when we are to ſtand ſo ſoon, indeed ſtand always, before a judge, who diſcerns the very bottom of our ſouls, and to whom a thouſand years are but as one day?

Have we then examined, as in his preſence, our lives and hearts? And by what ſtandard have we tried their innocence or guilt? The practice of others can no more juſtify us, than ours can them. Mere fancy and inclination is no rule at all. And reaſon, if biaſſed, is next to none. Have we then really done our utmoſt to diveſt it of ſelf partiality, to enlighten it by the inſtruction of pious and judicious friends and books, and, above all, to direct it by the unerring word of God? The written laws of that, cannot be moulded into what we pleaſe, like the variable arguings of our own minds; but will unmoveably oppoſe our moſt darling paſſions, if they be wrong. And ſince our final ſtate muſt be judged by it, ſurely our preſent ought too.

If then there be any perſons, (and God grant there be not many here) who have never duly obeyed his great command of conſidering their ways; *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden*

*harden not your hearts**. To-morrow may be quite too late; and at beſt every delay will make ſelf-inſpection more painful, and our condition more hopeleſs. But how carefully ſoever we may have ſearched into our breaſts already, freſh occaſions for it will be daily riſing, and unleſs the repetition of it be frequent, we ſhall perform it ineffectually, and very ſoon leave it off entirely. The preſent ſeaſon, indeed, is a yearly memorial of recollection and ſerioufneſs. But as the mere outward ſhew of it is of no value; ſo the more real goodneſs of a few weeks, if it end with them, is of very little. Our buſineſs, therefore, is, ſo to examine ourſelves now, as to live more Chriſtianly ever after. And whence can we better begin, than from what we owe to Him, that made us?

Do we then often think of him, and conſtantly reverence him, as the wiſe and good, the juſt and powerful, ruler of the world? Do we praiſe him for his mercies, pray for his pardon, protection and grace, not only now and then in public form, but daily in private, with a deep and awful ſenſe of what we ſay before him? Or can we, perhaps, ſome of us remember when we prayed in ſecret and in earneſt laſt! If not, why this neglect of the author of all we enjoy, the diſpoſer of all we hope for! Can we think it meanneſs to honour him, even with the loweſt ſubmiſſion? Do we think it meanneſs in our inferiors to pay due reſpect to us? If not, why in us to pay all reſpect to God? Will we then at leaſt do it for the future? Reſolving otherwiſe deliberately, comes very little ſhort of renouncing and defying him; and dare we then go thus far? What would it deſerve were we to treat an earthly ſuperior ſo? What doth it deſerve, if we treat the Lord and King of all ſo?

But, beſides worſhip, we owe him further, Faith in what he teaches, Obedience to what he commands. Have we then inquired with humility of heart, what doctrines he hath propoſed to our belief, what laws he hath preſcribed to our conduct, by reaſon or revelation? Or do we ſet up our own fancy and caprice for abſolute judges of his declarations and appointments; indolently and ſecurely determining, that this

* Pſalm cxv. 8.

article of faith, or rule of life, be its evidence what it will, cannot come from him; and another, though it doth, ought, however, to give way to our private intereſt, eaſe or humour! Could ſuch treatment of human laws be borne? And will the Almighty and All-wiſe bear it? *Be not deceived; God is not mocked.*

But, how fully ſoever we own the authority of religion, do we practiſe it? What is our great aim and endeavour here? Is it to ſecure a happy immortality? Or to graſp as many, as we can, of the ſplendid bubbles of this momentary ſcene? To get a little more power, or wealth, or rank, and then, with unabated thirſt, a little more ſtill, even to the very night that our ſouls ſhall be required of us? Whom do we think happy? The virtuous, the humble, the good? Or the artful, the proſperous, the great? What do we rejoice in, or grieve at? Is it our proficiency or failure, in love and duty to God, in reaſonableneſs of heart, uprightneſs of behaviour, diſengagement from this trifling world? Are theſe the things we are concerned about? Or a very different ſort of advantages and pre-eminences, belonging to the preſent ſtate of things entirely, and many of them quite contemptible, even were no other to follow? When our duty and our intereſt thwart each other, how do we act? Honeſtly and cheerfully give up the latter? Or frame poor excuſes for preferring it, or unfair contrivances for reconciling it to the former? Theſe are queſtions of the laſt importance. For if the *love of the world* be our reigning paſſion, *the love of the Father is not in us**. Which do we chooſe then, earth or heaven? Let us not cheat ourſelves, but ſpeak it out to our own hearts.

Or, however free in this reſpect, do we live to no other paſſion, equally unworthy? Is not our principal view to be admired for ſome accompliſhment, or applauded for ſome ability, of very little merit? And are we not led both into follies and ſins, to obtain and increaſe a falſe kind of eſteem from others, that will only tempt us to forget ourſelves? Do we attentively diſtinguiſh, what is truly of value, and to what degree? In how many things of conſequence we are deficient

* 1 John ii. 15.

ficient, in how few we excel? And *who hath made us to differ* * from the very meaneſt of our fellow-creatures? Are we willing, if need require, to be ſlighted and deſpiſed, hated and reproached, for the ſake of acting as we ought? Or do we *love the praiſe of men* †, and *ſeek not the honour that cometh from God only* ‡?

But, ſuppoſing we are clear both of worldlineſs and vanity, ſtill what can we anſwer with reſpect to pleaſure? Do we indulge none that is condemned by impartial reaſon; or, what we are ſure is impartial, the word of God? Every forbidden way of gratifying ſenſual deſires, viſibly produces many and dreadful miſchiefs and crimes. Exceſs and intemperance ruin the healths, the underſtandings, the uſefulneſs, the fortunes, the families of men. Breach of chaſtity produces all the ſame evils, and extends them further; brings innocent perſons into guilt and diſhonour, under treacherous pretences of eſteem and love; involves their innocent friends in diſtreſs and ſhame along with them, and occaſions innumerable evils, private and public. But particularly, breach of the marriage-vow diſſolves the very bonds of human ſociety. For if faith and truth, ſolemnly given, oblige not, oblige not both ſexes, in this caſe, why do they in any other? Are we then innocent in theſe reſpects; or have we repented; or do we deſpiſe the threatening, that *they, who do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God* §?

And, in regard to other indulgences, have we acted as becomes rational natures, deſigned to prepare ourſelves, by the diſcipline of this life, for ſpiritual happineſs in a better? Do we guard with care againſt ſinking into delicacy and indolence, againſt being diſſipated amidſt a hurry of gaieties, or loſt in polite amuſements and elegant trifles; or are we *lovers of pleaſures more than lovers of God* ‖? What proportion of our income do we ſpend in deeds of piety, charity, and proper beneficence? What proportion of our time in the religious and moral improvement of our hearts, and the real duties of our reſpective ſtations? All the wealth we have, and every hour we live, we muſt account for. Can we do it with joy?

* 1 Cor. iv. 7. † John xii. 43. ‡ John v. 44.
§ Gal. v. 21. ‖ 2 Tim. iii. 4.

Can we ſay we have been hitherto *working, while it was day, the works of him that ſent us* *? If not, will we now reflect how faſt the night approaches?

Another very material head of examination is that of our reſentments. Do we bear ill-will to no one, for excelling or coming too near us in rank, in power, in favour, in fortune, in qualifications of body or mind? Are we offended at no one, for doing what he juſtly might, perhaps what he ought; or, at leaſt, apprehended himſelf bound to? Have we inquired, with diligence and candour, into the truth and motives of the fact we are diſpleaſed with, and in effect heard both ſides? Do we make all fit allowances for the merit, for the repentance of the offending party, for human infirmity in general? Do we never puniſh but when it is plainly needful; and never then, but by lawful means, and in a proper degree; never accuſe but when we have evident reaſon; and always confine ourſelves, in doing it, to the *words of truth and ſoberneſs* †? We have been guilty ourſelves of many and great faults, both againſt God and man: do we forgive, as we hope to be forgiven?

A further inquiry yet muſt be (an extremely comprehenſive and intereſting one), what is the tendency of our common diſcourſe and converſation? Is it favourable to religion, to probity, to decency, to good will among men, or the contrary? Doth it expreſs diſlike of wickedneſs and folly, though countenanced by faſhion; or excuſe, if not approbation, of whatever chances to be in vogue? Doth it ſhew, that *in our eyes a vile perſon is contemned, but we honour them that fear the Lord* ‡? Or do we love to palliate the ſins of the former, and aggravate the failures of the latter? Have we indeed ever thought of rules on this ſubject? Or ſaid, *Our lips are our own, Who is Lord over us* §? Yet licentious talk, of every kind, doth unſpeakable miſchief. We all complain of it when we ſuffer by it. And when other perſons, when ſociety, when the honour of God, when piety and virtue ſuffer by it, there is evidently the ſame, there is often far greater guilt in it. And, ſince our hearts are as much concerned in what we ſay as what we do, the declaration is perfectly reaſonable:

* John ix. 4. † Acts xxvi. 25. ‡ Pſ. xv. 4. § Pſ. xii. 4.

ſonable: *By thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned* *. Which then ſhall *we* be?

But our behaviour muſt be regulated, not only towards our fellow-creatures in general, but with a cloſer view to the more particular relations of life. If married perſons, are we faithful, affectionate, conſiderate, mild, prudent? If children, do we make thankful returns for the care and tenderneſs of our parents; obey them dutifully; and pay them all that honour which we ſhall certainly expect hereafter to be paid us? If parents, do we preſerve towards our children a proper temperature of authority and condeſcenſion, and watch over and provide for thoſe to whom we have given being, ſo as may beſt ſecure their true happineſs, and our own comfort in them, now and at the great day? If heads of families, have we due regard to the preſent and eternal good of thoſe whom we take under our roof, remembering that we alſo have a maſter in heaven? If ſervants, do we behave with ſingleneſs of heart, ſhewing all fidelity, as unto the Lord, and not to men? As ſubjects, do we expreſs, in word and deed, the reverence and the gratitude we owe to thoſe whom Providence hath put in authority over us? Whether our condition be private or public, do we act in it unbiaſſed, to the utmoſt of our knowledge, by intereſt, prejudice, and partial affection? If employed in affairs, are we vigilant and upright, and ſtudious, in all things, of the general good, as men *fearing God, and hating covetouſneſs* †? If advanced to ſtations of eminence and power, do we countenance religion, virtue, merit, and diſcourage the worthleſs and profligate? Or only wonder the world is ſo bad, when we have contributed to make it ſo? or conclude it can never be good, when indeed we have tried no means to reform it?

Further, in this ſituation, are we careful what ſort of example we ſet others to copy after; and ſufficiently apprehenſive (for we can hardly be too much), that not only our ſins, but our imprudences, actions that are imprudent only as they endanger others, may produce an incredible deal of evil in thoſe around us and beneath us; whereas God expects all perſons to be his miniſters for good, in proportion to the abilities and opportunities with which he hath entruſted them.

Nor

* Matth. xii. 37. † Exod. xviii. 21.

Nor ſhould we ſtop at conſidering what our faults have been; that alone would be a ſpeculation of little uſe; but proceed to think what muſt follow from them. Indeed, have we not already ſome of us found our characters, our fortunes, our healths, impaired by them? Or, at leaſt, will they not of neceſſity, in a little time? Hath not the happineſs we promiſed ourſelves from our tranſgreſſions, proved very inſignificant, or very ſhort-lived! Have they not often brought upon us dreadful anguiſh and diſtreſs; and ſometimes forced us into moſt deſtructive methods of trying to get rid of the torment of thought? Or, how joyfully ſoever we go on at preſent, yet the further we go, muſt not our return be more difficult; and unleſs we return, our end more deplorable? Nay indeed, will not the leſs blameable, the allowable indulgences of this world, if we purſue them eagerly, and live chiefly to them, exclude or wear out from our ſouls, thoſe impreſſions of, and attentions to ſerious piety, which alone will bring us peace in our laſt hour? We can affect, it may be, to talk of death with much indifference, but have we in earneſt brought it near to us, and conſidered what it is? An immediate paſſage, without recall, into that ſtate, where ſmall and great ſhall ſtand before God; who, as ſurely as he governs the world with juſtice and wiſdom, *will bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil**, and recompence us all according to our uſe of every talent committed to us. Are we then prepared againſt that day? Ready for the ſearcher of hearts, were he to call us now to our final account? If not, do we reflect how ſoon we may be called, how ſoon we muſt, and what the conſequences will be for ever? Do we then at length reſolve againſt all ſin, all occaſions of ſin, all ſupineneſs and negligence from this time forwards? Are we unfeignedly ſorry that we have reſolved it no ſooner? Are we deeply ſenſible, that, in all we have done amiſs, we have provoked a moſt holy God; and have no claim to pardon, much leſs to happineſs hereafter, but through the mercy procured by our bleſſed Redeemer? And will we accordingly fly to him alone, with an humble faith in the atonement of his death, and the efficacy

* Eccl. xii. 14.

efficacy of his grace; or boldly hazard all, on the ſufficiency of our own ſtrength, which hath deceived us ſo often; and the imagined merits of our own righteouſneſs, or our own repentance, imperfect and defective as they both are?

Think not any of theſe harſh and ill-natured queſtions; they are the very friendlieſt that can be propoſed. Think them not gloomy and melancholy inquiries; they are the ground-work of all true comfort. No one indeed hath a right to require an anſwer to them from another; but God hath full right to command, as he doth, by his word and the preachers of it, that every one put them home to his own ſoul. They carry ſtill more terror to thoſe, who are bound by their office to utter them, than to thoſe who ſit and hear them; but terror inexpreſſible to all who provide not to anſwer them well; and joy inexpreſſible to all that do. *Let us* therefore conſcientiouſly *ſearch and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord our God**. Let us beg of him fervently, to ſhew us what manner of perſons we have been, are, and ought to be; and ſay to him, in the words which he himſelf hath dictated, *Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanſe thou me from my ſecret faults*†. *Try me, O God, and ſeek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well, if there be any way of wickedneſs in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting*‡.

* Lament. iii. 40. † Pſ. xix. 12. ‡ Pſ. cxxxix. 23, 24.

SER-

SERMON CIV.

PARDON, GRACE, AND EVERLASTING LIFE, TO BE OBTAINED ONLY THROUGH THE MERITS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

2 COR. v. 21.

For he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him.

THESE words contain that great article of the Chriſtian faith, that the death of our bleſſed Saviour hath obtained for us pardon, grace and everlaſting life; which important truth is ſo ſtrangely diſregarded, even by many who call themſelves his diſciples, that I think it neceſſary

I. To confute the prejudices that lead men to think ſlightly of their need of the ſatisfaction which he made on our behalf, before I proceed

II. To explain and defend this part of the Chriſtian doctrine.

I. Our condition, with reſpect to God, is infinitely the moſt important of all our concerns, for we are abſolutely in his power alone; and the forgiveneſs of our ſins is the moſt important article in that condition. Were we innocent creatures, we could only doubt what happineſs we had to hope for from him; and about that we might be, though not indifferent, yet free from anxiety. But as we are all guilty, the firſt queſtion, and a very alarming one, is, what puniſhment we have to fear? Thoughtleſſneſs and partiality may indeed diſpoſe us to imagine, that however right in ſpeculation the laws of religion and virtue may be, yet in practice great allowance is due to inclination, this being as truly part of our nature as reaſon. And when perſons find many others that ſeem to judge in the ſame manner (eſpecially if ſome of

them be of that rank, which is admitted in moſt things to ſet the pattern), then, in companies together, they can go almoſt any lengths; decide in a moment, that this is ſuperſtition, and that preciſeneſs; that ſuch reſtraints are abſurd, ſuch others unneceſſary; and take fancy and faſhion, mixed together as it happens, for the only rules of life, without a ſingle reflection whether they are acting as they ought, or the leaſt apprehenſion, that, if they are not, any harm will follow, provided they guard againſt a few preſent inconveniences. Yet many of theſe perhaps are people of conſcience in ſome things, but in others, they deſpiſe all mention of it; and, for the moſt part, if they behave tolerably well to their fellow-creatures, have ſcarce the notion of any duty they owe to their Creator, at leaſt beyond the mere propriety of attending his worſhip now and then, in compliance with a cuſtom that is not yet quite worn out.

Now, would but ſuch men venture on a very ſafe thing, a little ſerious thought, they would ſoon perceive, that, though inclination is a part of our nature, yet every inclination muſt not be gratified, for this would be miſchievous both to all around us and to ourſelves: that therefore we ought to have ſome rule, which to indulge, and which to reſtrain: that fancy and faſhion can never be the rule; for both are continually varying, and would often lead us to diſhonour and ruin: that we have within us a natural ſenſe of right and wrong, which paſſes judgment with authority on our actions, frequently whether we will or not; and that, if it be in many caſes obſcure and weak, our buſineſs is to improve and ſtrengthen it: that the great and wiſe Being, who hath made us and all things, muſt intend we ſhould behave ſuitably to this conſciouſneſs which he hath given us, and obey whatever commands he may think fit to ſuperadd; that both his holineſs and his goodneſs oblige him, as the Sovereign of the world, to preſerve due order amongſt his ſubjects, by recompencing them as they deſerve; for that ſome actions deſerve well, and ſome ill, we every one of us inwardly feel.

Yet we are very apt to perſuade ourſelves, that it is beneath him to look ſo low as the paſſions and follies of ſuch inconſiderable creatures as we are. But I intreat you to conſider: Is there, upon earth, that creeping thing, that weed,

that ſmalleſt particle of dead matter, which God hath not formed with inexpreſſible wiſdom, and doth not govern by ſtated laws, which have all their force from the never-ceaſing exertion of his power? And how can we doubt then of his governing the rational, that is, the nobleſt part of his creatures; by laws equally adapted to them, by precepts, rewards, puniſhments? What is there worthy of him to do, if this be not? But indeed, he hath both aſſured us of his doing it, and we experience that he doth it. We perceive his injunctions and prohibitions within us; we paſs his ſentence on ourſelves when we do amiſs; we undergo corrections of his appointment, when we ſuffer for what we have done; and by theſe ſpecimens of his juſtice now, he warns us of the full execution of it hereafter. For if wickedneſs eſcape, and finally triumph, in one ſingle inſtance, then is God no longer infinitely perfect, but partial or impotent, like one of us. Earthly princes confine their care to the moſt important points, becauſe attending to every point is not below them, but above them. The nearer they can approach towards it, the livelier images they are of him, who *humbleth himſelf to behold the things that are in heaven and earth* *, and who *numbereth the hairs of our heads* †, and weighs every thought of our hearts. Let not good perſons be terrified at this, for *he knows whereof we are made, and is merciful to them that fear him* ‡. But let the inconſiderate, the raſh and the bold, learn from it, both to be cautious how they act, and to recollect how they have acted. We ſeem very commonly to think, that the ſins of our former days loſe their guilt in proportion to their diſtance, and are gradually annihilated as the impreſſion of them wears out of our minds. But with God what is paſt is not gone. On the contrary, unleſs we entitle ourſelves duly to forgiveneſs, it remains on record an indelible evidence againſt that day, when *the books ſhall be opened, and the dead be judged out of the things which are written in them* §.

It greatly concerns us therefore to look back on all our faults, that we may ſee diſtinctly what our true condition is. Probably enough, on a ſuperficial inquiry, the verdict may be highly to our advantage. But our buſineſs is to make a thorough

* Pſ. cxiii. 5, 6. † Matth. x. 30. ‡ Pſ. ciii. 13, 14. § Rev. xx. 12.

thorough ſearch, and know the reality; by placing before our thoughts (after compoſing them in a ſerious temper), firſt the ſeveral rules of a godly, righteous, and ſober life, made known to us by reaſon and ſcripture, then our own conduct under each head. Whoever hath not examined thus, has need to begin immediately; and whoever hath, will have need to repeat his work frequently from time to time. But the preſent ſeaſon is peculiarly appropriated to pious recollection. If therefore we contrive methods of running away from it now, we too plainly ſignify our intention of neglecting it for ever; and if thoſe contrivances be public and profeſſed ones, we offend againſt common decency, as well as religion.

In the performance of this duty, we ought by no means to accuſe ourſelves falſely; but it would be a fatal miſtake to flatter ourſelves; to overlook or extenuate the faults we have committed, or fancy, that be they ever ſo bad, we could not help it, and others have done worſe; and nothing remains but to be eaſy about the matter. How many ſoever have done amiſs, they ſhall all account for their doings; for numbers of criminals can never change wrong into right; and judging the world is no harder to God, than condemning a ſingle perſon. He hath notified his will to us all, by the light of our own conſcience, by the revelation of his holy word, by the inſtructions of other religious books, by the private admonitions of our friends, by the public warnings of his miniſters. He hath given us much more ſtrength to perform our duty than we uſe: he is ready, on our humble requeſt, to add to it as much as we want. And in theſe circumſtances it can never be a ſlight matter, if, in any one inſtance, we have been diſobedient or negligent towards him; have unjuſtly hurt or diſregarded any of his creatures, our brethren; have corrupted or debaſed our own natures; and behaved unſuitably to the condition in which he hath placed us, or the ſpiritual bliſs for which he hath deſigned us.

We are ſtrangely diſpoſed to conſider ſome tranſgreſſions as being ſubjects of mirth only. But in truth, every departure from the rule of right, and the commands of our Maker, is a thing of great moment; and what we are pleaſed to imagine trifling, were it not for cuſtom and ſelf-partiality, we ſhould

ſee to be of great conſequence. We are alſo extremely apt to think our faults more important, in almoſt every other view, than as they offend God; and yet the direct contrary is one of the plaineſt truths that can be. For as all we enjoy proceeds from him; as our happineſs or miſery depends entirely upon him; and every bad thing we do (whomſoever elſe it may injure or not), is always injurious to his authority, and hateful to his holy nature; he is evidently, beyond all compariſon, the perſon whom we are continually to have moſt in our thoughts, whoſe favour we ſhould chiefly deſire, whoſe diſpleaſure we ſhould chiefly dread. If therefore we have acted amiſs (and who hath not, in more and greater points than he is willing to allow)? barely acting otherwiſe, without regard to God as intereſted in the caſe, can never be enough. Till we feel a deep ſenſe in our hearts of the unworthineſs of our behaviour towards him, we are far from becoming inwardly what we ought: and unleſs we keep alive and ſtrengthen that ſenſe, by humbly and frequently expreſſing it to him, with earneſt deſires of his pardon and grace, and hearty endeavours of amendment, we neglect the methods of reconciliation and recovery, which reaſon itſelf points out to us.

There are ſo few brought thus far in religion, that very poſſibly the firſt natural thought of a great part of them may be, that nothing farther can be wanting to procure them forgiveneſs and future happineſs. And it is very true, that we can do no more, not ſo much indeed, without the divine interpoſition. But it by no means follows, that this will be enough, even to ſave us from puniſhment, much leſs to obtain us reward, and leaſt of all the unſpeakable reward of everlaſting life. As the laws of God are juſt, he may juſtly inflict the penalties of them on tranſgreſſors. As he is the moral governor of the univerſe, he muſt ſupport the honour of his government throughout his creation. Human government can never be ſupported, without making a great difference, in many caſes, between penitent perſons and innocent ones. Whether the divine can or not, we none of us know; for the extent of it is boundleſs; and we are acquainted but very imperfectly with ſo much as our own ſmall part. Even in this, we ſee, that by the conſtitution of things, which God hath

hath appointed, repentance often avails not at all, and often very imperfectly, to prevent the bad effects in this world of our faults and follies. And how ſhall we be ſure, that the ſame kind of rules, which we experience to take place here, may not alſo take place hereafter? Whatever therefore God ſhall reveal to us concerning theſe matters, we ought to receive with implicit reverence; and uſe, with the utmoſt thankfulneſs, any method which he ſhall inform us is neceſſary, or expedient, in order to avoid the ill conſequences of our ſins, though poſſibly we perceive no manner of connection between the remedy and the cure. Nor ſhall we, in ſo doing, pay any greater regard to the all-wiſe God (though unſpeakably greater is his due), than we pay continually, and ſhould be inexcuſable if we did not, to our poor ignorant fellow-creatures, whom we truſt, full *as* implicitly, with our fortunes, our healths, and our lives.

What then hath God taught us concerning our caſe? That neither ſuch repentance, nor ſuch reformation, as we are capable of, will ſuffice to obtain us forgiveneſs and eternal happineſs. For he hath ordained farther means for theſe ends: and he certainly would not, without cauſe, eſpecially ſuch extraordinary means as thoſe in the text, which I have purpoſely deferred to mention, till having ſhewn you, that pardon is the great thing we all want, and cannot of ourſelves ſecure, I might diſpoſe you to embrace, with a more joyful faith, that reviving aſſurance, that *Him who knew no ſin, God hath made to be ſin for us, that we might become the righteouſneſs of God in him.* And this doctrine I now proceed

II. To explain and defend.

The natural and obvious meaning of theſe words, interpreted jointly with innumerable other paſſages of ſcripture, is, that our gracious Maker, being deſirous perfectly to relieve mankind, both from the original bad effects of the fall of our firſt parents, and the perſonal guilt of our own tranſgreſſions; but perceiving, in his unſearchable wiſdom, ſufficient reaſons not to do it on ſuch confeſſions and ſubmiſſions only as we were able to make, appointed that his ever-bleſſed Son (who voluntarily condeſcended to engage in the merciful work), ſhould take upon him the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and bear, for our ſakes, inconveniences and ſufferings, from which otherwiſe

otherwiſe the dignity and the purity of his nature entirely exempted him; that he took upon him the form of man, not only in order to teach the doctrines, and exemplify the practice of true religion, which men had almoſt forgotten, but alſo to undergo that painful and ignominious death, which he foreſaw wicked perſons, offended by his reproofs, would inflict on him; that this conſent of his *to be made ſin for us*, to be crucified as a malefactor on our account, foreknown from eternity, our heavenly Father hath been pleaſed to conſider as a ſin-offering made to himſelf; an acknowledgment, on our behalf, of the ill deſert of diſobedience; a ſatisfaction, in our ſtead, to the honour of his juſtice; and an inducement to beſtow on all, who ſhall qualify themſelves for receiving it, ſuch full pardon as elſe they could never have had. Thus, by *making him to be ſin for them, he makes them the righteouſneſs of God through him*; that is, on account of Chriſt's yielding to be treated as a criminal, he treats them as no longer criminals; giving them joyful proofs here of his protecting providence and ſanctifying grace, and raiſing them up hereafter, from the univerſal ſentence of death, to the bleſſed enjoyment of eternal life.

This is ſo evidently the tenor of the whole New Teſtament, that no one could ever have entertained the leaſt doubt on the ſubject, but for the ſeeming difficulty of reconciling ſome part or other of it to his own apprehenſions and notions; which ſurely, in a matter ſo far above our reach, we have little cauſe to truſt to, againſt the expreſs declarations of him who knows all things. It implies no abſurdity in the leaſt. Guilty perſons cannot claim forgiveneſs, nor innocent perſons everlaſting happineſs, as matter of right, but of mercy and favour only. Now God is not leſs merciful and favourable to his creatures, if he provides on purpoſe a particular method for beſtowng theſe bleſſings on them, than if he did it without ſuch a proviſion. Nay, indeed, more mercy is ſhewn in making ſuch a proviſion, when it is wanted, than could be ſhewn were the caſe better. The goodneſs of God appears eminently, in propoſing and accepting, what nothing but goodneſs could induce him to propoſe and accept: the goodneſs of our bleſſed Lord appears equally in executing the gracious deſign by ſuch condeſcenſions, as we read in the goſpels, particularly

of this week; and the goodneſs of the Divine Spirit, in applying the whole, by his inward operations, for the benefit of our ſouls. That one perſon ſhould undergo pains and hardſhips for the ſake of others, and a good perſon ſuffer many things to prevent the miſery and promote the happineſs of bad ones, is ſo common in lower inſtances, that though we could not have expected, we may well believe, this high degree of God's love towards us, *that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us* *. We ſee not indeed fully how his death produces our ſalvation; nor do many people ever know how the ſteps taken by their friends, for their pardon or advancement, proved effectual; yet they are not ths leſs effectual on that account. But thus much, however, we ſee daily, that, from regard to the ſervices, and ſufferings, and interceſſions of ſome perſons, others have favours done them, very wiſely and juſtly, which elſe neither wiſdom nor juſtice would have permitted. And why then ſhould it not be a fit recompence to our bleſſed Lord (as undoubtedly it muſt be the moſt acceptable one poſſible), for what he ſo cheerfully undertook and went through, that mankind, to whom he had made himſelf related, in ſo extraordinary a manner, with ſo amiable an intention, ſhould be treated the more kindly on his account: that, to ſpeak in the language of the prophet †, *when he had made himſelf an offering for ſin, he ſhould ſee of the travail of his ſoul and be ſatisfied, by the knowledge of himſelf juſtifying many?* For obſerve, no one will ever be accounted righteous for his ſake, who doth not in fact become righteous by his means. And rewarding his incarnation and death, by putting ſinners into his hands to be made happy, on condition that he ſhould firſt make them holy, pious and virtuous, doth no leſs honour to the juſtice of God than to his mercy.

And how little ſoever we apprehend the reaſons of what Heaven hath done towards our deliverance, yet, as we muſt perceive the fitneſs of all that we are to contribute towards it, repentance, faith and obedience, we know very fully as much as we need. They, who never heard of the interpoſition of Chriſt, may poſſibly receive ſome benefit from it, on a general application, that God will be merciful to them in ſuch

* Rom. v. 8. † Iſa. liii. 10, 11.

ſuch manner as he ſhall think proper. But of us will be required an explicit petition, for that mercy which he hath offered in that form which he hath directed. And if, inſtead of this, we will reſt our cauſe ſolely on the footing of our own righteouſneſs, or our own repentance, imperfect as we know, or eaſily may know, they both are: if we refuſe to acknowledge that efficacy in the death of our bleſſed Saviour, which he and his apoſtles have aſcribed to it; from what cauſe ſoever this proceeds, other than excuſable miſtake; whether from a ſlight opinion of the deſert of ſin, from a high notion of human virtue, from unwillingneſs to confeſs obligations, or from the mere pride of theſe poor ſhallow underſtandings of ours, claiming to know every reaſon that God hath for his actions, while yet we know completely no one thing around us; it is a preſumptuous neglect, full of guilt. And one motive for making our ſalvation dependent on another, and the manner of his obtaining it for us incomprehenſible to ourſelves, might well be, to check that ſwelling vanity of our hearts, which is the parent of almoſt all our ſin and miſery, and to teach man *to walk humbly with his God**.

Let us therefore thankfully accept his mercy, juſt as we find it offered to us; and learn to own, that we *have all ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God; and are juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt; whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs; that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus* †.

* Mic. vi. 8. † Rom. iii. 23—26.

SER-

SERMON CV.

The Fatal Consequences of a Partial Obedience to the Commandments of God.

James ii. 10.

For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

FEW perſons, I apprehend, have either read or heard theſe words, without being in ſome degree ſhocked at them, and looking upon them as *a* very *hard ſaying* *. For though, from reverence to ſcripture, we may endeavour to keep down what riſes in our minds, yet no wonder if we feel a ſtrong reluctance to believing, that he who tranſgreſſes in ſome things, is guilty of others, in which he doth not tranſgreſs; and ſo by running into one extreme, becomes chargeable with the oppoſite; which, it muſt be owned, this paſſage, upon the firſt view of it, appears to affirm. But then we ought to remember, that in all diſcourſes, upon all ſubjects, many things occur, which are by no means to be underſtood according to the mere ſound of the words, but according to the nature of the matter in queſtion, the viſible intention of the writer or ſpeaker, and the uſe of the language. And more eſpecially ſhort ſentences and maxims, whether of religion, morals, or prudence, ought to have this allowance made to them; becauſe they are often purpoſely conceived in terms, the obvious meaning of which alarms men; that ſo their attention may be excited more effectually to that hidden wiſdom, which, on farther inquiry, it will be found they convey. Now the aſſertion before us is a Jewiſh maxim, found in ſeveral of their

* John vi. 60.

ancient books, written ſince the times of the apoſtles, and therefore probably enough uſed before their time, when a controverſy amongſt them, of which we have footſteps in the goſpels, might eaſily furniſh an occaſion for it.

They had a law, of which the precepts, adding the ceremonial to the moral, were very numerous. The obſervation of all theſe, though adapted with great wiſdom to the circumſtances in which they were placed for many ages, was found very burdenſome: and therefore ſome of them had begun to perſuade themſelves, and teach others, that a ſtrict obedience to whichever part they pleaſed was ſufficient; or, to expreſs it in their own words, that *God gave ſo many commandments to them, that by doing any of them they might be ſaved* *; by which they meant at leaſt any great one; and hence, in all likelihood, aroſe the queſtion, *Which was the great commandment in the law* †? A doctrine of ſo pernicious conſequence as this, we may be ſure, while there was any regard to truth left, would be ſtrenuouſly oppoſed. And it was natural, that the contrary doctrine ſhould be expreſſed by the teachers of it, in the ſtrongeſt manner they could well invent. Now, ſuch undoubtedly is that of the text, which may ſeem indeed to have overdone the matter not a little. But the limitations belonging to it were probably well underſtood by every body then. And therefore all that St. *James* needed, in writing to the Jewiſh Chriſtians of thoſe days, was to confirm it by the ſanction of his authority; though in our times it is requiſite to explain, and guard it againſt miſtakes; which alſo he hath greatly aſſiſted us in doing.

For, that he never deſigned in the leaſt to affirm, that being guilty of one ſin would make mens condition as bad as being guilty of ever ſo many, we may be very ſure; not only from the monſtrous unreaſonableneſs of ſuch a notion, and its

* Pocock on Hoſ. xiv. 2. from Ikharim, l. 3. c. 29. In hunc ordinem recipiunt quemvis antiqui, qui ob unicum tantummodo præſtitum præceptum, non rejiciens interim cætera, ſed ea approbans, meretur nomen Iſraelitæ. *Mic. ben. Iſr.* de Reſur. l. 2. c. 8. p. 181. But then he ſaith, l. 1. c. 6. p. 43, 44. that the Ancients held they were firſt to ſuffer for their bad deeds, then to be rewarded for their good deeds; but ſtill all Iſraelites were to be finally happy, unleſs they diſbelieved Providence, the Law, or the Reſurrection.

† Matt. xxii. 36.

its inconſiſtence with what the other parts of ſcripture hath expreſsly taught, but from hence alſo, that were this the caſe, all ſinners whatever muſt receive an equal condemnation; and yet he himſelf, in the very firſt of the next chapter, ſpeaks of ſome that *ſhall receive a greater condemnation.* Since therefore this could not be his meaning, let us proceed

I. To conſider what it was, or might be.

II. To draw ſuitable inferences from it.

I. To conſider what it was, or juſtly might be.

And here, *offending in one point* muſt of neceſſity ſignify offending wilfully; for through ignorance, inadvertence, or ſurpriſe, *we all offend in many things*, as this very epiſtle tells us*; yet we cannot think the text was intended to bring every perſon under the guilt which it mentions: and therefore we are not to underſtand it of ſuch offences, but of preſumptuous and habitual ſins, that whoever breaks the law *in one point is guilty of all.*

Again, offending in one point may mean either offending in ſome one of ſingular importance, or in any one, great or ſmall. There have been perſons, who, taking it in the former ſenſe, have underſtood the one point to be that of mutual love, which St. *James* juſt before †, as well as St. *Paul* ‡, ſays *is the fulfilling of the law.* And as the whole law of ſocial life *is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf* §, he, who offends in that one, will certainly be guilty of all, ſince all depend on that ‖: and however ſtrictly the outward acts of each may be performed, the inward ſpirit of them cannot be preſerved. But if it be thought rather, that *offending in* any *one point* whatever was meant by St. *James*, then we muſt inquire ſomewhat farther, to know what the laſt words, *guilty of all*, can ſignify. They certainly carry an appearance of aſtoniſhing ſeverity; and yet there is no neceſſity of underſtanding them to be any thing more than a ſtrong expreſſion (for all the eaſtern people expreſſed things very ſtrongly), importing, that whoever is thus

 blameable,

* James iii. 2. † Ver. 8. ‡ Rom. xiii. 10. § Ver. 9.

‖ Merito ſit omnium reus, qui contra illam [Charitatem] facit, ex qua pendent omnia. *Aug. ad Hieron.* See alſo the Life of St. Erkenwald, in the Appendix to Dugdale's Hiſtory of St. Paul's, p. 8.

blameable, is greatly blameable, and liable to a heavy puniſhment. There is one paſſage in St. *Matthew* particularly, which will ſhew this in a clear light; I mean that, where our Saviour tells the Jews, that *on them ſhould come all the righteous blood ſhed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, the ſon of Barachias, whom they ſlew between the temple and the altar.* Nor was he content with ſaying ſo once, but repeats it immediately, *Verily I ſay unto you, all theſe things ſhall come upon this generation* *. What could he poſſibly mean here? Not literally, that any of the Jews ſhould be puniſhed on account of the murder of *Abel*, for they did not ſo much as deſcend from his murderer; nor that any of that generation ſhould undergo the ſentence of God for what another generation did; but, as their wickedneſs, eſpecially in perſecuting him and his diſciples, was, and he foreſaw would be, incredibly great, he deſigned to ſay, in the moſt forcible manner, that their puniſhment ſhould be ſo too. And to raiſe, if poſſible, their conceptions of it high enough, he purpoſely uſes terms, which, if taken ſtrictly, would be too high; and ſpeaks, as if every innocent man, that had ever been put to death, ſhould have his blood required at their hands. Nor did he alone venture on ſuch forms of ſpeech. St. *John* hath exactly the ſame, where he ſaith, that *in Babylon was found the blood of all that were ſlain upon the earth* †. This may ſeem to us taking a ſtrange liberty, but it was familiar to the Jews; their own writers ſince are full of it; and abound in ſayings, which they intend only for bold figures, and the ignorant miſtake for groſs abſurdities. Indeed all languages have more or leſs in them of this kind; only we overlook it in our own, while we are ſhocked at it in others. To ſay, that a man hath done all the miſchief, or ſuffered all the miſery in the world, is ſo common a way of ſpeaking, that perhaps we ſhall be ſurpriſed, upon recollection, to find it quite as ſtrong as the beforementioned ones out of ſcripture. Juſt in the ſame manner, then, as the Jews of that one age were to bear the puniſhment of all the righteous blood, that had been ſhed in all ages, the wilful breakers of one commandment incur the guilt of breaking

* Matt. xxiii. 35, 36. † Rev. xviii. 24.

breaking all the commandments; that is, their crime is very great, and their condemnation ſhall be in proportion. For they who offend but againſt a ſingle precept, yet if they do it deliberately and habitually, which, you have ſeen, is the caſe here ſuppoſed, are doubtleſs faulty to a much greater degree, than ſuch as offend againſt more, but leſs frequently, and without deſign.

Had therefore the words of the text been true only in this looſer ſenſe, they had ſtill, conſidering the genius of the eaſtern ſtile, been very juſtifiable. But indeed there is much further truth in them. For *guilty of*, may mean liable to; the ſcripture ſaith, *guilty of death* *, as well as of ſin; and then, *guilty of all*, may mean, liable to all the puniſhments denounced by the law, in his proper degree. Or though we ſuppoſe the phraſe to ſignify, as it ſeems to do, guilty of breaking all the precepts of the law, ſtill, when any perſon preſumptuouſly tranſgreſſes one part, his guilt in ſome meaſure extends to the whole. For the whole of God's law is but one ſyſtem, and every part of it connected with every other; ſo that, if any is broken, all are weakened. The whole of piety and virtue is but one diſpoſition of mind, one uniform principle of doing what is fit; and if what is unfit may ever be done, there can be no reaſon aſſigned why it may not always be done †. Further yet: The lawgiver's title to command, from which the law derives its whole force, this too is one and the ſame throughout; and if he hath not a right to be obeyed in every article, he hath no right to be obeyed at all. The obſervation that follows in the verſe after the text, is perfectly juſt: *he that ſaid, Do not commit adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill:* nor is there a higher regard due to him in one caſe than in the other. Whoever therefore denies the obligation of any precept, which he admits to be a precept, diſowns the whole authority of God at once; for he hath not a jot more in the reſt than he hath in this, where he is

* Matt. xxvi. 66.

† The ſimile of Max. Tyr. Diſſ. 31. § 2. Edit. 1740, though applied ſomewhat differently by him, is applicable to this purpoſe alſo. Ὥσπερ γαρ εν ταις των μελων αρμονιαις, το παραλείφθεν, κἀν σμικρον ῃ, διαλυει τον κοσμον του μελους, ουτω κἀν τῃ του βιου αρμονιᾳ. κτλ.

is allowed none *. Or, if a perſon only refuſes to obey a commandment, which he thinks is not one, yet, if his thinking ſo proceeds from his unwillingneſs to think otherwiſe, it may be a near approach to the ſame guilt; for, at this rate, he may reject them all, if he diſlikes them all. Nay, ſuppoſing he doth not ſet himſelf to diſbelieve his duty, but is prevailed on by temptation to neglect ſome part, yet then, he not only might, with juſt as good reaſon, neglect every part; but probably it is from no principle of conſcience that he performs any. Attention to his intereſt, or want of inclination, may keep him good in moſt caſes beſides; but if the fear of God, or love of virtue, were what kept him ſo, one ſhould think it would have kept him from one ſin as well as from another. And therefore he that violates any divine command, it may be feared is guilty in the reſt, which he obſerves, of not obſerving them on ſuch grounds as he ſhould; which, to the purpoſes of religion and his own future happineſs, is too near a-kin to not obſerving them at all. For if an action, which would otherwiſe be a good one, is done from a motive that hath no good in it, this cannot be the ſervice that God requires. And on ſome of theſe accounts perhaps it is, that *Tully* affirms, in words pretty much like thoſe of the text, that whoever is deſtitute of any one virtue, is poſſeſſed of none †.

But I would not be quite ſo rigid neither. There are doubtleſs but too many inconſiſtent perſons, much to be pitied, and often in ſeveral particulars to be eſteemed, that ſhew a true and great regard to their duty in ſome things, while in others they are enticed to act very ill. Theſe now are not the moſt highly faulty, but ſtill really faulty, with reſpect to the whole of God's law. In thoſe branches which they tranſgreſs, there can be no queſtion of their guilt; and in thoſe which they obſerve, they are guilty at leaſt of laying in their own

* The Talmudiſts obſerve this particularly concerning a denial of the ſabbath. כולה התורה הכופר בשבת כאילו בופר בכל *Aben Eſra* gives the reaſon: For he denies the creation. Seld. de Jure Nat. & Gent. l. 3. c. 10.

† Ecquid ſcis igitur—virtutem—ſi unam confeſſus ſis te non habere, nullam eſſe te habiturum? Tuſc. Diſp. lib. 2. § 13. Edit. Davies. Where ſee other authorities in the notes. See alſo De Fin. 5—23.

own way grievous temptations to tranſgreſs them. For the indulgence of any ſin ſtrangely leads men at all times, and almoſt forces them at ſome times, into the commiſſion of many more, which poſſibly they little thought of; till at the breach, which appeared ſmall and harmleſs, there ruſhes in a torrent, that overwhelms every thing right in them; and thus, by *offending in one point*, they too frequently become, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, *guilty of all* *. Their guilt indeed, as to theſe latter ſins, is not complete, till they have committed them; but it began, when they brought themſelves firſt into the hazard of committing them. And even ſhould they be ſo happy as to eſcape, running into danger is no ſmall miſbehaviour.

Another fault of theirs, with reſpect to ſuch parts of God's law as they do not perſonally break, is, that their example of offending in ſome points, encourages the world around them to offend in other points. For if you indulge the vice which you like, why may not they indulge the vices they like? And thus, though you are guilty of practiſing but one ſin, you are guilty of promoting the practice of every ſin; and will ſhare in the crime, and conſequently in the puniſhment, not only of what you directly do, but perhaps of what you abhor, becauſe you have been the occaſion of others doing it.

But there is ſtill a ſenſe left, and a very intereſting one, in which the words of St. *James* are true; *the royal law*, that he mentions juſt before the text, and refers to in it, is plainly the law of the kingdom of Chriſt, that is, the goſpel. Now, the goſpel terms of ſalvation are, that whoever ſincerely, though imperfectly, obſerves the whole of its precepts, is entitled, through faith, to its forgiveneſs and rewards: but if a perſon is wilfully guilty of any one ſin, ſo long as he continues in that ſtate, *Chriſt ſhall profit him nothing* †. For, even ſuppoſing him pardoned before, that pardon was but a conditional one, and cannot become abſolute, till the time of his trial is over. Every preſumptuous tranſgreſſion opens the account anew, which repentance and amendment had cloſed; and

* Si fatereris ſcienter januam incendiſſe, ſi unum tignum, puto, tota domus intelligeretur ex parte. Nec enim quiſquam omnia incendit, ſed unam aliquam partem, ex qua ſurgat in omnia ſe ſparſurus ignis. Sen. Excerpt. Declam. lib. 5. Controv. 5.

† Gal. iii. 2.

and makes him a debtor once again for every thing that he hath ever done amiſs. Read but the parable of the unmerciful ſervant, in the 18th chapter of *St. Matthew*, and you will be perfectly ſatisfied of this truth. Indeed the very reaſon of the thing ſhews, that whoever performs not all the conditions of the Chriſtian covenant, is entitled to none of the benefits of it: but though his caſe ſhall doubtleſs be equitably conſidered, and with due allowances to his former virtue or penitence, yet it ſhall not be conſidered as coming under the promiſes of the goſpel; but he remains chargeable, though not with any thing he hath not done, yet with every thing he hath done. And which of God's commandments is there, that we have not, at ſome time, in ſome degree, wilfully tranſgreſſed? This therefore is a very important ſenſe, were there no other, in which he, who offends in one point, is guilty of all.

You ſee then how entirely juſtifiable this paſſage of St. *James* appears, when well examined. And the chief things to be remembered concerning it are theſe. He doth not mean, that committing one ſin makes our condition juſt as bad as committing ever ſo many. But he may reaſonably mean, that being vicious in any reſpect, weakens and endangers our virtue in every reſpect; that deliberately breaking God's law, but in one caſe, implies in it a denial of his authority in all caſes; and not only, in juſt conſequence, may, but daily, in fact, doth produce an univerſal diſregard to him, both in ourſelves and others; nay, ſuppoſing the miſchief to ſtop far ſhort of this, yet that a failure in any ſingle condition of the goſpel covenant precludes us from all the rewards, and in a degree proportioned to the greatneſs of the failure, will bring upon us all the threatenings of it. Let us therefore now conſider,

II. The inferences to be drawn from the words thus explained; which are two.

1. Since it is neither affirmed by St. *James*, nor true in itſelf, that the guilt of any one ſin is equal to the guilt of ever ſo great a multitude of ſins, there can be no encouragement in the world for the wicked to run on in ſtill more wickedneſs; but, on the contrary, next to becoming uniformly good, their moſt ſerious intereſt lies in leſſening the number and meaſure of the things in which they are bad. Too commonly,

ly, when once they are fallen into the practice of a ſin, either it requires another to conceal or ſupport it, or a ſecond inclination claims the ſame right to indulgence as the firſt, or uneaſy reflections drive them to ſeek for conſolation from irreligious principles, or loſs of reputation amongſt the virtuous, reduces them to court acceptance, at any rate they can have it, among the vicious. And though they are ſenſible that all this plunges them deeper, yet their reaſoning is, that any one ſin, if the ſcripture be true, makes their caſe deſperate, and ever ſo many can do no more; that, if they are to be miſerable hereafter, whoever ventures upon the thing, it is arrant abſurdity in him to be ſolicitous about the degree of it, and live in a ſtate of perpetual inconſiſtency, neither hoping at all for the rewards of virtue, nor enjoying freely the pleaſures of vice. Now, undeniably this ſort of conduct is a folly, and there is only one ſort greater; but that is the very one, of which you make choice; reſolving to do amiſs in more points, becauſe you do amiſs in ſome; and to make your condition as much worſe as you can, becauſe it is a very bad one already. If the miſery, which God will inflict hereafter, is to be feared, ſurely an increaſe of it is, exactly in proportion, ſo much more to be feared; and, in ſuch a caſe as this, a large increaſe muſt be expected. There may be excuſes pleaded for falling into ſome faults, but there can be no excuſe for adding others to them wilfully. There may be hope of amendment, while you are gone but a little wrong; and perhaps you pleaſe yourſelf with the thought that you ſhall amend; at leaſt the time may come, when that proſpect, if you could entertain it, would be a pleaſing one indeed. Why then, in the mean while, will you be needleſsly deviating farther and farther; and laying daily new obſtacles (ſome of which may prove inſuperable), in the way of your own return? Poſſibly, indeed, you may utterly deſpiſe ſuch conſiderations as theſe, and think it great bravery to do ſo; but it is an unwiſe bravery. You are not certain, you cannot be certain, that either immorality, or contempt of religion, are ſafe things: and if they are unſafe, the leſs you are guilty of either the better. Were a future account only poſſible, it ought to put you under no ſmall reſtraints; but how much greater, if it be probable, if it be certain? It is very true,

the only behaviour that will ſecure you thoroughly, is keeping clear of every thing bad; but at leaſt do not go lengths to which you are not tempted; do not go every length to which you are tempted. 'If you will be debauched, why will you be injurious too? If you will be both diſſolute and diſhoneſt, why need you be profane alſo, and ſcorn and ridicule virtue and piety, as well as neglect them? Or, on the other hand, however you act in relation to things of the next world, why ſhould you abandon yourſelf to profligateneſs and folly in reſpect of this, and be wretched before your time? Fear not in the leaſt, but there will be guilt and miſchief full enough in thoſe kinds and degrees of ſin, from which you imagine you cannot abſtain; ſo that you will have no occaſion to increaſe the liſt of them wantonly. And be aſſured, that however painful it may be to retreat, or ſtop ſhort where you are, going farther on will be much more ſo, probably in this life, but aſſuredly hereafter. For if God will at all diſtinguiſh then between good and bad (as he muſt and will, if he be juſt, or wiſe, or true), he will as certainly diſtinguiſh, and to purpoſe too, between bad and worſe.

But abſurd as it would be to reckon one ſin as dangerous as many (againſt which, notwithſtanding, it was needful to give a ſtrong caution, becauſe the text, at firſt ſight, may appear to favour it), ſtill the oppoſite error is equally abſurd, which yet, in ſpite of the text, the whole ſcripture, and the plaineſt dictates of common reaſon, great multitudes will perſiſt in; that, I mean, of thinking or acting, as if they thought, that ſince every one is peculiarly inclined to ſome fault or other, he will be diſpenſed with in that, provided he performs but the reſt of his duty tolerably well. And therefore,

2. The principal inference to be drawn from St. *James's* words, is, that no one ſin whatever can be wilfully indulged, without forfeiting our ſalvation. Indeed if it could; if our obedience may ſafely fail juſt where alone it is, properly ſpeaking, tried; that is, where we find ourſelves peculiarly tempted to diſobey; what proof do we give of any regard to virtue, or what muſt become of the intereſts of it in the world? Few people have above one or two faults to which they are much addicted; ſo that allowing them theſe, is allowing them all; and giving them leave to be as wicked as

they

they want to be. Or ſuppoſing they have ſeveral bad inclinations; yet, if one of them is to be forgiven, becauſe it is a favourite, why not the reſt, if they can make the ſame plea? And further, if your faults are to be overlooked in the day of judgment, why not the different faults of every one elſe? One perſon is prone to intemperance, another to lewdneſs, a third to falſehood and diſhoneſty, a fourth to malice and revenge. If inclination, and conſtitution, and what we are pleaſed to call nature, is to be a warrant for any of theſe, why not for all? But you will plead it perhaps only for ſmall ſins. And ſo one is indulged firſt, becauſe it is a little one; then another, becauſe it is not much bigger; and where ſhall we ſtop, or in what will this end? Every one's ſin is ſmall in his own opinion, and none is ſo in reality. For, be it in what inſtance it will, diſobeying our Maker, violating our conſciences, and breaking through the ſacred bonds of truth and duty, can never be deemed a ſlight matter, nor will it hereafter be found ſo.

But is there no allowance then to be made for human weakneſs, and the ſtrength of temptation? Undoubtedly great allowance, in all ſuch failings as we watch, and ſtrive, and pray againſt, and perſevere in oppoſing: but then, whoever doth this in earneſt, will certainly gain ground of his failings; and therefore whoever gains little or no ground, doth not do it in earneſt. Wiſhing now and then that we were better; being grieved a little when we think how bad we are; and, in a ſudden fit of goodneſs, making a faint eſſay towards reformation, and laying it aſide again; this is far from performing what, by the aſſiſtance of Heaven, we might, if we would. And whoever can think that no more is expected of him, muſt think at the ſame time, that God hath very little attention to the obſervance of his laws, and that his laws are of very little uſe towards the government of the world.

All perſons therefore, who have a proper regard to ſome branches of their duty, but not to others, ought ſeriouſly to conſider, that they are doing a great deal, without doing any thing to effect, for want of doing the whole; that it muſt be peculiarly grievous to them in the next life, to come ſo near the kingdom of heaven, and yet to fall ſhort of it; to be *al-*

moſt, but not *altogether Chriſtians* *. Since they take pains to correct part of their bad inclinations, it cannot but be worth their while to correct the reſt. Either it will not be very difficult, or the difficulty will not continue very long, or the reward will be very ample. And whichſoever is the caſe, it muſt evidently be their intereſt to make their lives eaſy, by *walking in every ordinance of the Lord blameleſs* †; for *ſo ſhall we not be confounded, if we have reſpect unto all his commandments* ‡.

But then we muſt ever underſtand this, not only of moral duties, not only of the duties of natural religion, but of revealed alſo; and particularly of that great and leading commandment, *that we believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt* §; believe in him practically, as well as ſpeculatively; believe in him as our Redeemer and Mediator, no leſs than our inſtructor; truſting in his merits for pardon and acceptance; in his grace for ſtrength and comfort; and ſeeking to *be found in him, not having our own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is of God by faith* ‖. For we have all offended in every point; and having recourſe to this one, of penitent faith in Chriſt, working by love, is our only cure for paſt ſins, our only means of future obedience. *By the deeds of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified* ¶; but *whoſoever believeth in him, ſhall not be aſhamed* **.

* Acts xxvi. 28, 29. † Luke i. 6. ‡ Pſal cxix. 6. § 1 John iii. 23.
‖ Phil. iii. 9. ¶ Rom. iii. 20. ** Rom. x. 11.

SER.

SERMON CVI.

The Just Estimate of the Shortness of Human Life, and our Proper Employment here.

Psalm xc. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom.

THERE are not many ſubjects recommended ſo often from the pulpit to your ſerious conſideration, as the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of human life: indeed there are very few that deſerve it ſo well. For our buſineſs is, not to entertain the curioſity of our hearers with learned diſcoveries, refined ſpeculations, or uncommon remarks, but to remind them continually of ſuch truths as are moſt uſeful to direct their practice, by mending their hearts. And how impoſſible ſoever it may appear, that any one ſhould be ignorant of ſome of them, yet if men will forget or neglect them, and live as if they knew them not, they muſt be ſtill repeated and inculcated. The wiſdom of our gracious Maker hath provided, that the greateſt part, not only of our duties, but of the motives to perform them, ſhall naturally and frequently ſuggeſt themſelves to our minds. And amongſt the latter, one ſhould think there was none more obvious, more unavoidable, than the conſideration of our own mortality. But as thoſe objects, which are continually preſent to our ſenſes, are apt, for that reaſon, ſcarcely to affect us more than if they were abſent; ſo this truth, being familiarized to us by daily examples, about which we are indifferent, makes almoſt as little impreſſion upon us as if the caſe were otherwiſe. It is a fact, which we have no doubt of, and no pleaſure in; we therefore turn our thoughts to ſomewhat elſe, with ſuch unhappy

ſucceſs, that, though the conſequences of it are the moſt intereſting to us all, that poſſibly can be, multitudes of us live, as if we neither believed nor ſuſpected any thing of the matter. When indeed the voice of exhortation, or the unexpected deceaſe of a friend or acquaintance, forces us to attend, we acknowledge, for that moment, and perhaps with ſome concern, that we muſt expect to die ſoon; but quickly proceed again to act, as if we hoped to live for ever. And therefore it was a wiſe prayer of *Moſes*, that God would condeſcend to help our infirmity in this important point. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wiſdom.* Or, as the words may be tranſlated, without any material change in the ſenſe: *Teach us to number our days thus;* to count them, as the preceding part of the pſalm had done, like the *ſleep* of a night, *like the graſs, which in the morning flouriſheth, but by the evening is cut down and withered:* or again, *Teach us to number our days aright; and we will bring,* that is, in order to learn, or, *we ſhall acquire, an heart of wiſdom.*

The expreſſion of *numbering our days,* carries in it an implication that they are not many. For in ſcripture, as being *without number* denotes a large multitude *, ſo the contrary phraſe hath of courſe the contrary ſignification. Thus, when *Moſes* mentions the continuance of the cloud only a few days upon the tabernacle, it is in the Hebrew *days of number* †. When he threatens, *The Lord ſhall ſcatter you amongſt the nations, and ye ſhall be left few in number,* it is again only *men of number* ‡. And when *Belſhazzar* is told, that *God hath numbered his kingdom,* the meaning is, that its concluſion was near at hand §. Yet we cannot ſay, that life is too ſhort for us to enjoy the proper happineſs of it. For in our preſent fallen condition, all things conſidered, we have much reaſon to be contented, nay thankful, that the duration of man upon earth is no longer; and ſhould have ſufficient cauſe to be weary of it if it were. For ſurely *threeſcore years and ten* is full ſpace enough to be ſpectators of, and ſharers in, the follies, the ſins, the ſufferings, of ſuch a world as this. And both

* Gen. xli. 49. Numb. xxiii. 10. Judges vi. 5. vii. 12. 1 Kings iii. 8. Job v. 9. ix. 10. xxxiv. 24. Eccl. i. 15.

† Numb. ix. 20. ‡ Deut. iv. 27. § Dan. v. 26.

both they who are *ſo ſtrong that they come to ſourſcore years*, experience a peculiar degree of *labour and ſorrow* *: and they that, after *walking with God, are taken by him* † ever ſo early, ought to be conſidered as *taken away* in mercy *from evil* ‡ of one kind or another. Nor is life too ſhort for the buſineſs we have to do in it. For God requires, in this and all reſpects, only in proportion to what he gives. And we ſhould every one of us eaſily do the whole that is needful here, would we but reflect what it is, and ſet about it in earneſt; which they that will not, when the hours allotted them are ſo few, would be leſs likely ſtill, if they had more to trifle away. But there yet remains a ſenſe, in which we all feel and own the ſhortneſs of life, when it is too late, if not before; that is, we find it waſte much quicker than we imagined; not only becauſe we ſeldom attain to live near ſo many years as we flatter ourſelves, but becauſe the utmoſt extent to which we can live, doth not allow ſuch a multitude of things to be done in it, as ſome fancy and imprudently attempt, nor afford room for ſuch waſte and negligence, or ſuch a ſeries of errors and wrong ſteps, as others adventure upon. And this being ſo evident and intereſting a truth, the ſerious and frequent conſideration of what it forbids, and what it calls for, muſt powerfully contribute to produce both a temper and a conduct of true wiſdom.

But to this end, we ſhould place before our eyes two diſtinct views of our exiſtence here: as it regards the preſent world, and as it is alſo a ſtate of preparation for a future. At preſent I ſhall dwell chiefly on the former view; which, though it be a very confined and imperfect one, yet was of ſo great uſe to the good and virtuous under the Old Teſtament, when the world to come was leſs clearly revealed, that it ought not to be ſlighted now. And it viſibly hath this advantage, that whatever is rightly inferred from it, muſt be univerſally confeſſed; becauſe, let men bring themſelves to think ever ſo little, or doubt ever ſo much, concerning the next life, they cannot doubt, but that which now is, will ſoon, and they know not how ſoon, come to its concluſion; from which truth alone, if they reflect on it duly, they will not

* Pſ. xc. 10. † Gen. v. 24. ‡ Iſ. lvii. 1.

not fail to learn important leſſons of moral, and even pious (which will thus appear to be wiſe) behaviour. *As of the green leaves on a thick tree, ſaith the ſon of Sirach, ſome fall and ſome grow, ſo is the generation of fleſh and blood: One cometh to an end, and another is born. Every work rotteth and conſumeth away, and the worker thereof ſhall go withal. Bleſſed is the man that doth meditate good things in wiſdom, and that reaſoneth of holy things by his underſtanding* [*].

1. Firſt then, as all virtues in general, both by their own proper influence, and the bleſſing of God, which reaſon leads us to expect, and ſcripture expreſsly aſſures us of, conduce to prolong our days, the conſideration of their natural brevity may well direct us to a virtuous conduct; particularly to ſobriety, temperance, and chaſtity; to a prudent moderation of anger; and to whatever duties have eſpecially the promiſe or the proſpect of long life annexed to them. For nothing can be more abſurd, than to contract into a yet narrower compaſs what is ſo far from needing it; unleſs it be complaining againſt Providence, that human life is of ſo ſmall continuance, when ours might be of much greater, if we would; nay, when perhaps, at the very moment of our complaint, we are taking all the pains we can, not to live out one half of the few days that are appointed to man upon earth; and, in thoſe we do live, to make ourſelves miſerable and fit for nothing; haſtening old age before its ſeaſon, and loading it with diſeaſes, by an idle, luxurious, and libertine youth.

2. Since we have but a ſmall time to ſtay here, it is our wiſdom to make it as eaſy and agreeable to ourſelves, and all with whom we have any intercourſe, as we are able; and to imitate perſons of prudence, who occaſionally go journies together; bearing with each others temper and behaviour; giving mutual comfort and aſſiſtance under the misfortunes and inconveniences of the way; and continually endeavouring to preſerve or reſtore the good humour and cheerfulneſs of the company. By this method, we might live much more in a few years, that is, have a greater feeling of the bleſſings of life, than by being reciprocally troubleſome and vexatious, we can in ever ſo many. And ſurely it is very ſtrange, that having

[*] Eccluſ. xiv. 18, 19, 20.

having ſo ſcanty a ſhare of being allotted us here, and this expoſed by nature to ſuch multitudes of unavoidable troubles and ſufferings, we ſhould contrive to pour additional bitterneſs into our common cup, by needleſs injuries and provocations. At beſt we have no happineſs to ſpare; and therefore ſhould rather ſtudy to increaſe our portion, by friendlineſs and kind offices, which will of courſe invite a return of them, than leſſen it by ſelfiſhneſs, haughtineſs, reſentment, perverſeneſs, unſeaſonable intermeddling; qualities, moſt of them uneaſy in themſelves, and all of them productive of numberleſs uneaſineſſes with every body around us. Or how little ſoever we may regard our own tranquillity, or how well ſoever we may hope to maintain it, in the midſt of diſputes and contentions; yet, as moſt perſons are differently affected by ſuch things, ſurely the condition of humanity in general ought to move compaſſion in us; and we ſhould permit the little which our poor fellow-creatures enjoy of good, to be enjoyed, while it laſts, in peace. We might image to ourſelves, methinks, thoſe who ſuffer by us, complaining and pleading, in language like that of *Job*: *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth not. And doſt thou open thine eyes upon ſuch an one, and bringeſt me into judgment with thee? Seeing his days are determined, his bounds appointed, that he cannot paſs; turn from him, that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh, as an hireling, his day**. *Are not my days few? Ceaſe then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I ſhall not return, even to the land of darkneſs, and the ſhadow of death* †.

3. The ſhortneſs of life ſhould teach us to be ſpeedy and diligent in doing all ſuch things as we ought to do. What theſe are indeed, it doth not alone ſufficiently ſhew. But they are moſt of them ſo plain, and the reſt ſo conſtantly taught us, that almoſt every one deſigns to practiſe them ſooner or later, and become extremely good before he dies. But then they perpetually defer and poſtpone the time of beginning this reformation, on frivolous pretences; and never conſider to any effect, how their life is paſſing away, and

* Job xiv. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6. † Job x. 20, 21

gliding from under them, in a courſe of actions, which they own is faulty, and will at laſt lament in vain. They think they may throw away a great deal of it, and have plenty left, to act as they judge proper afterwards. Now, were it to laſt ever ſo long, yet ſpending any part of it amiſs, either wilfully or thoughtleſsly, would be very unwiſe. But conſidering how ſhort both others, and we ourſelves, as far as our experience reaches, have always found it; to ſquander what with our beſt management is but enough, and what poſſibly may not hold out another day, is folly beyond expreſſion. Therefore the ſon of *Sirach*, concerning one part of our duty, acts of kindneſs, adviſes thus *: *Remember that death will not be long in coming; and that the covenant of the grave is not ſhewed unto thee. Do good unto thy friend before thou die, and according to thy ability ſtretch out thy hand, and give him.* But long before that, *Solomon* had eſtabliſhed the ſame rule, on the ſame foundation, concerning all other parts: *Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt* †. If then we are guilty of any ſin, or liable to any ſmaller blemiſh, let us inſtantly amend, leſt we ſhould never have an opportunity; or at beſt ſhould leave a doubt, whether we forſook our faults, or they forſook us. If there ſhould be any valuable quality that we want, and ſhould reckon ourſelves happy in the poſſeſſion of, let us acquire it as ſoon as poſſible, and have the longeſt enjoyment of it that we are able. Whatever we ſee would be right and fit for us to do; whatever we ſhould be unwilling to go out of the world and leave undone, let us take the only way to make ſure of doing, by doing it without delay. Every friendly care, every uſeful labour, every act, by which we can either provide properly for thoſe who immediately belong to us, or benefit any other of our fellow-creatures, let us apply it directly; *and work the works of him that ſent us, while it is day; for the night cometh, when no man can work* ‡.

4. Another point of wiſdom, which the ſhortneſs and precarioufneſs of our preſent ſtate of being ſhould teach us, is to avoid long purſuits of worldly profits or pre-eminences; which probably

* Eccluſ. xiv. 12, 13. † Eccl. ix. 10. ‡ John ix. 4.

probably either we ſhall not have time to attain, or muſt ſoon quit. Indeed, were the extent of man's life ever ſo great, it would be but a poor employment of it to fix our hearts on gaining more wealth, more power and influence, or higher rank, than would do us good; to neglect worthier attentions, and diſquiet ourſelves and our neighbours with theſe. But for a creature, whoſe days *fly away as a dream when one awaketh* *, to have an endleſs train of ſelfiſh deſigns, and ſchemes laid up for many years, when perhaps *this night his ſoul* may *be required of him* †, is monſtrouſly unſuitable. And yet, I know not how it is, the nearer people are to their end, the more eager they commonly are to get what they, of all the world, have the leaſt occaſion for, and the leaſt excuſe for being ſolicitous about; and inſtead of that eaſe and repoſe, which their time of day calls for, unnaturally force themſelves to labour and fatigue of body and mind, when they can ill ſupport either; till, in the midſt of this prepoſterous vehemence and buſtle, they are ſwept on a ſudden into another ſtate, with heads and hearts full of nothing but this. But though the abſurdity of ſuch immoderate attachments is moſt palpable, when perſons are upon the verge of life; yet, in every part of it, the imprudence of forming diſtant expectations and deſigns, and having no reaſonable proſpect of their accompliſhment, or at leaſt of benefit from them, is both very real and too frequent. We have all a great deal to do in amending our ways, and rectifying our tempers, on which our happineſs even here depends, and we ſcarce ever think of it; whereas we need but a very ſmall ſhare of temporal advantages to carry us on comfortably to our journey's end, and yet we ſet our minds almoſt wholly on increaſing it; many by injuſtice, others by hard-hearted penuriouſneſs, or ſinfully anxious care; the former unmindful of the prophet's warning, *He that getteth riches, and not by right, ſhall leave them*, perhaps *in the middle of his days; and*, whenever he leaves them, *at his end ſhall be a fool* ‡: the latter, equally regardleſs of the Pſalmiſt's beautiful reflection: *Behold thou haſt made my days as it were a ſpan long, and mine age is even as nothing before thee: and verily every man living is altoge-*

* Job xx. 8. Pſ. lxxiii. 20. † Luke xii. 20. ‡ Jer. xvii. 11.

*ther vanity. Man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who ſhall gather them**. Reaſonable induſtry, to procure what is requiſite for us in our ſtation, and for thoſe with whom we are entruſted, far from being blameable, is a duty. But when they, who have no families, are as earneſt in hoarding, as if they had ever ſo large ones, only to diſpoſe of their wealth, they hardly know or care to whom, and ſometimes have not the heart to diſpoſe of it at all: or when they, who *have* families, make it their buſineſs to ſcrape together for them what will probably do them no real ſervice, but only be a *temptation and a ſnare* † to them; when they grudge to relieve the neceſſitous and miſerable, can think of nothing with pleaſure, but accumulating ſtill more, and are unable to ſay themſelves how much they would have: ſuch a temper and behaviour is utterly unfit for ſo ſhort-lived and frail a being as man. *Having therefore food and raiment*, that is, a competent proviſion of neceſſaries for ourſelves and ours, *let us be therewith content: for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out* ‡.

5. A fifth uſe of numbering our days is, to check and compoſe all ſtrong emotions of mind about worldly concerns; for in ſo tranſitory a ſtate there can be nothing to deſerve them. Why ſhould we be elated with hope of future good, when both our own lives, and thoſe on whom our expectations may depend, are ſubject to ſuch innumerable chances; and the higher we raiſe ourſelves in imagination, the more afflicting will be our fall? *Put not your truſt*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *in the ſon of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts periſh* §. *Ceaſe ye from man*, ſaith the prophet, *whoſe breath is in his noſtrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of* ‖? Why again ſhould we be dejected with fear of future evils, when a thouſand accidents, which none of us can gueſs at beforehand, may prevent their coming; or, if they do come, our head may be laid low enough before that time, and far enough out of the way of feeling them; or, even if they ſhould light upon

* Pſ. xxxix. 5, 6. † 1 Tim. vi. 9. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8.
§ Pſ. cxlvi. 3, 4. ‖ Iſ. ii. 22.

on us, a ſhort life hath no room in it for long ſufferings? If we are viſited with tormenting or wearifome diſeaſes, the harder they preſs us, the more ſpeedily, for the moſt part, they will work our deliverance, and bring us to that place, where *there ſhall be no ſorrow nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain* *. If we loſe our beſt friends, it was at moſt but a very few years that we could have enjoyed them. If we ſuffer vexations from our enemies, croſſes in our affairs, all will ſoon be over, and we ſhall be ſecurely ſituated, *where the wicked ſhall ceaſe from troubling, and where the weary ſhall be at reſt* †. If others obtain the honours, the profits, the gratifications, we wiſhed for, there is little cauſe to envy them ſo periſhable a diſtinction. If we obtain them ourſelves, there is as little cauſe for exultation or pride while we have them, or indignation or ſurpriſe, when he, who gave for a time, takes away, or permits any one elſe to take away, what death is hourly haſtening towards us to carry off irrecoverably. The various paſſions belonging to our nature were interwoven in it, to ſet us on purſuing good and avoiding evil, where it would prove to any purpoſe; for which end a moderate exerciſe of them ſerves beſt; and the ſpirit of contented reſignation (of which there is plainly a principle in man, if he would but uſe it), was appointed for our relief, and a great one we ſhould find it, where we can relieve ourſelves no other way. In ſo uncertain a ſtate, vehemence of temper is ſure miſery, and in *patience* alone can we *poſſeſs our ſouls* ‡. A quiet and meek ſubmiſſion therefore to whatever may happen, without indulging hope or fear, joy or ſorrow, anger or diſſatisfaction, is evidently the frame of mind which our mortality requires. Or to expreſs it in the words of St. *Paul: This I ſay, brethren, the time is ſhort. It remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this world, as though they uſed it not; for the faſhion of this world paſſeth away* §.

It is true, calming our agitations by the proſpect of death, may be thought by ſome to be curing a leſs evil by introducing a greater, which is left without cure. But indeed, viewing

* Rev. xxi. 4. † Job iii. 17. ‡ Luke xxi. 19. § 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

ing it often and ſteadily will diminiſh its terrors (which, unleſs we look beyond it, are chiefly imaginary), as it doth thoſe of every thing elſe in the world. Viewing it as the will of God, will oblige us in duty to ſubmit to it contentedly, *remembering them that have been before us, and that come after; for this is the ſentence of the Lord upon all fleſh; and why are we againſt the pleaſure of the Moſt High* *? Then viewing it alſo as a relief, though not of the moſt deſirable kind, muſt contribute to reconcile many to it ſomething farther, and on the whole pretty well. For though *bitter is the remembrance of death to a man that liveth at reſt, and hath proſperity in all things, yet juſtly acceptable is it to the needy, and to him whoſe ſtrength faileth, and that is vexed with all things* †. Yet ſtill, it muſt be owned, this conſolation is but a melancholy one. And therefore, God be thanked, though numbers of pious men, in ancient days, had probably no very clear knowledge of any other, yet he hath enabled us, chiefly indeed by revelation, yet partly by reaſon itſelf, to ſee diſtinctly what they did not. And accordingly I muſt add,

Sixthly, and laſtly, That the moſt important leſſon, taught us by the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of our preſent life, conſidered in itſelf, is, that we may reaſonably expect, and ſhould therefore continually look forward to another. The longeſt term at which we can arrive here, and the utmoſt uſe we can make of it, is ſo very a trifle and nothing, compared with the capacity for improvement, both intellectual and moral, which we experience ourſelves to have, that, according to the moſt probable judgment we are capable of forming, there muſt be ſomewhat farther, and unſpeakably better, deſigned and reſerved for us by our wiſe and bountiful Creator; ſome other ſcene of exiſtence opened, when this is cloſed, in which we ſhall grow up to our maturity; and manifeſt and rejoice in thoſe perfections of our nature, which are hid and buried at preſent, in all to a great degree, in ſome almoſt entirely. That a being, qualified for ſo much, ſhould have ſpace allowed it for ſo little, would appear an evident impropriety and diſproportion; which cannot be juſtly charged upon any part of the works of God. And the more we conſider what numbers

* Eccluſ. xli. 3, 4. † Ibid. ver. 1, 2.

bers are cut off prematurely in their tender youth, or juſt when their faculties are beginning to ripen; but eſpecially, with what ſtrange inequality, and unſuitableneſs to the behaviour of men, both proſperity and adverſity are diſtributed amongſt them by the confeſſedly unerring hand of Providence, the ſtronger the argument grows that this cannot be all; that the view of life, which we have been taking hitherto, is a poor and narrow one indeed; that another of infinitely greater moment is to follow it, in which every thing wanting here ſhall be ſupplied, and every thing wrong ſet right. But convincing and intereſting as theſe deductions of reaſon are, nothing is able to *bring life and immortality into* full *light*, much leſs to aſſure impenitent ſinners of everlaſting puniſhment, and penitent believers of eternal rewards, but the goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt* *. This therefore muſt be always the principal object of our attention: and this, through God's grace, to be obtained by its means, will teach us, what elſe we cannot learn effectually and practically, to think of this our mortal ſtate, as a ſhort and precious opportunity given us to prepare for another and an endleſs one; the happineſs or miſery of which is to depend on the affections cultivated, and the deeds done by us, while in the body. Were the life which we now live imagined to be the whole, multitudes would argue, plauſibly though unjuſtly, that it could be no great matter how they ſpent it; whether they acted virtuouſly or viciouſly, diſcreetly or indiſcreetly, ſince *one event happeneth to all, and the wiſe man dieth as the fool* †. But our ſhare in the recompences of that which is to come, cannot poſſibly be regarded as a ſlight thing. If then we are to be bleſſed or wretched for ever, according as we behave well or ill in the mean while, this makes our conduct a ſerious point beyond expreſſion; and draws moſt affecting conſequences after it; ſuch as the weakeſt perſon muſt ſee, and the moſt artful can raiſe no objection againſt: that the pleaſures and profits of ſin are never to allure us, nor the difficulties and afflictions of virtue to deter us in the leaſt, but both in compariſon to be looked on as if they were not: that the enjoyments of the preſent ſtate are to be uſed with cautious moderation, and the burdens of it to be borne

2 with

* 2 Tim. i. 10. † Eccl. ii. 14, 16.

with cheerful hope: in ſhort, that we are to *walk by faith, not by ſight* *; applying indeed to worldly buſineſs, as far as our ſtations require; and partaking of worldly comforts, as far as will excite our thankfulneſs to God for them, and anſwer the purpoſes intended by them; yet ſtill ſetting our affections principally, not on the attainment of tranſitory accommodations or amuſements, during our journey, but on ſecuring, by a diligent performance of the work for which we were ſent upon it, a joyful entrance into our *continuing city* †; which God of his infinite mercy grant us, through, &c.

* 2 Cor. v. 7. † Heb. xiii. 14.

SER.

SERMON CVII.

The Just Estimate of the Shortness of Human Life, and our Proper Employment here.

Psalm xc. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom.

FROM theſe words I have propoſed to treat of the wiſdom, the inſtruction in piety and virtue, which may be learned from the ſhortneſs and uncertain duration of human life; conſidered,

I. With reſpect to the preſent ſcene of things only:

II. To that eternal one which is to follow.

Even the former of theſe views, though extremely and eſſentially imperfect, yet affords, as I have ſhewn you, many important leſſons and directions; that by ſobriety, temperance, chaſtity, and due government of all our paſſions, we ſhould endeavour to prolong the ſpace allowed us here; that we ſhould uſe every proper method of making it as eaſy and comfortable to one another as we can; that we ſhould be diligent to improve our little time to the beſt purpoſes, and do quickly what we would not leave undone; that we ſhould proportion our deſires of riches, and honours, and power, and every worldly good, to the ſcanty term which we have for the acquiſition and enjoyment of them; that we ſhould moderate our emotions of joy and grief, of hope, and fear, and anger; vehemence in any of them being plainly unſuitable to a condition ſo tranſitory; and laſtly, that from the low attainments of our earthly ſtate, and the ſhort continuance and unequal diſtribution of its bleſſings, we ſhould be raiſed to the belief and earneſt expectation of a better.

Very different concluſions, I am ſenſible, and very bad ones, have been often drawn from the ſmall number of our days; of which, beſides many inſtances in the looſer Heathen writers, we have ſo diſtinct and beautiful an account in the ſecond chapter of *the book of Wiſdom*, that I ſhall repeat it, and make ſome remarks on it, before I go further.

The ungodly ſaid, reaſoning with themſelves, but not aright, Our life is ſhort and tedious; and in the death of man there is no remedy, neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave. For we are born at all adventures, and we ſhall be hereafter as though we had never been. Our time is a very ſhadow, that paſſeth away; and after our end there is no returning. Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are preſent; and ſpeedily uſe the creatures, like as in youth. Let us fill ourſelves with coſtly wine and perfumes; and let no flower of the ſpring paſs by us: let us crown ourſelves with roſe-buds, before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuouſneſs; let us leave tokens of our joyfulneſs in every place; for this is our portion, and our lot is this. Let us oppreſs the poor righteous man; let us not ſpare the widow, nor reverence the ancient grey hairs of the aged. Let our ſtrength be the law of juſtice; for that, which is feeble, is found to be nothing worth *.

Now, it is certainly to be expected, that if this life were to be our all, we ſhould each make the beſt advantage of it that we could. But then the way to do ſo is a very different one from that, which *the ungodly, reaſoning with themſelves, but not aright*, propoſe. Thoughtleſs gaiety and diſſolute pleaſures, how inviting ſoever the deſcription of them may ſound, bring perſons daily, and often with ſurpriſing ſuddenneſs, into diſtreſſes and ſufferings of various kinds; which, deſtroying their reputations, their fortunes, their healths, will give them much more cauſe to complain of the ſhortneſs, and yet tediouſneſs of life, than they had when they firſt attempted to palliate this evil by ſuch fatal remedies. For vice and folly have the unhappy ſecret of reconciling this ſeeming contradiction, by leſſening the extent of our days, and at the ſame time increaſing the burden of them.

But

* Wiſd. ii. 1—12.

But ſuppoſing that ſuch miſeries could be avoided, human nature is not fitted for a perpetual hurry of amuſements and extravagances; nor, without a very painful force upon itſelf, can bear them; but all exceſſes of this kind are ſeverely puniſhed, ſooner or later, by that lowneſs and dejection, which fails not to follow wrong indulgences; and yet more ſeverely by that moral principle which is deeply rooted in our hearts, that voice within, which will have its turn to be heard, as indeed it ought to be heard always. They therefore are the happy perſons, not that can ſpend the moſt hours in forgetfulneſs of themſelves, in idle and unwiſe, and perhaps criminal gratifications, but who can delight to be their own companions; can enjoy the calmer and ſtiller, but much more inward and real pleaſure, of a ſerene and compoſed mind, of a worthy, and benevolent, and thankfully pious heart; who are able to look back without ſhame, and forwards without fear. Theſe are the ſatisfactions of a reaſonable being; which, as they who have once fully experienced them, have always declared to be the higheſt poſſible; ſo they, who have not, ſhould, in all fairneſs and common diſcretion, make due trial of them, before they reject them. And upon ſuch trial they would find, that man is not a creature formed to diſſipate himſelf in trifling levity, much leſs to wallow in debauchery and brutiſhneſs; but hath the ſeeds of ſomewhat noble and divine planted in his breaſt; which his great concern is to cultivate, improve and exert. They would learn a higher valuation of themſelves, and feel how juſtly the ſon of *Sirach* hath directed: *Glorify thy ſoul in meekneſs, and give it honour according to the dignity thereof**.

As to the ſecond inference, drawn by the ungodly, which patroniſes oppreſſion and cruelty, there is ſomething ſo hateful and ſhocking in theſe enormities; ſo contrary to the tenderneſs, which is natural to our hearts, till we wickedly harden them; ſo inconſiſtent with the welfare and very being of ſociety, that no one guilty of ſuch practices can at all expect either to be eaſy in himſelf, or ſafe from others. And therefore, though the intereſts of this life alone were to be conſidered, no argument could be rationally urged from the ſhort-

* Eccluſ. x. 28.

neſs of it, in favour of any thing ſo entirely oppoſite to the evident deſign of him who placed us here for our good, as both voluptuouſneſs and injuſtice are.

But whatever concluſions men may think they can draw from this firſt and imperfect view, yet, when our life on earth is contemplated, in the ſecond that was propoſed, as a ſtate of preparation for another and an endleſs one, then neither the wit, nor almoſt the folly of man, can make any other than virtuous inferences from the ſhortneſs of it. And to the want of looking upon it in this light, the book of Wiſdom aſcribes principally thoſe profligate reaſonings, which I have been confuting. *Such things did they imagine, and were deceived; for their own wickedneſs blinded them: as for the myſteries of God, they knew them not; neither hoped they for the wages of righteouſneſs, nor diſcerned a reward for blameleſs ſouls* *. Without this knowledge, it was weak to argue as they did; but with this knowledge, it had been impoſſible; ſo important are the alterations which it makes in our caſe. Indeed it ſupplies us, in a very great meaſure, with three of the chief things which we want in our pilgrimage through the world. Theſe are,

1. Conviction of the neceſſity of applying diligently to know and do our duty.

2. Encouragement to perſiſt in it to the end againſt temptation.

3. Support under the afflictions to which we are expoſed in the mean while.

Now, ſerious and frequent reflection, how ſoon the preſent ſtate will terminate in one of infinitely more conſequence, is adapted to be of the utmoſt ſervice to us, in each of theſe reſpects, through that bleſſing, which God is ready to beſtow on our ſincere endeavours uſed, and prayers offered up, in the name of Chriſt; *for without him we can do nothing* †.

1. To keep alive in us a ſtrong conviction of the neceſſity of applying diligently to know and do our duty.

Were this life the whole of our exiſtence, there would be many thoughtleſs enough to imagine, that being ſo ſhort, there could be no mighty difference in what manner it was ſpent,

* Wiſd. ii. 21, 22. † John xv. 5.

ſpent, right or wrong; for ſo ſmall a journey, any way of undertaking it would ſerve, and fancy be guide ſufficient; the advantages of chooſing well could not be exceeding great; the inconveniences of chooſing ill would ſoon be over, indeed whenever one pleaſed; and the end of all things would quickly come, when prudence and imprudence would be juſt upon a level. But plauſible as this may look, when it gratifies the prevailing humour, ſurely whoever conceives the preſent ſtate to be his whole portion, be it as ſhort as it will, ought to think it deſerves his whole attention; elſe he may not only miſs all the happineſs that he can promiſe himſelf, but find there is room enough for ſuch a one as he is, to be more than a little miſerable as long as he lives; notwithſtanding which, he will probably wiſh to continue in being as long as he can.

Yet ſtill, if the ſuppoſition, on which theſe men venture their all, were true, the harm which they would ſuffer by conducting themſelves abſurdly, would not be ſo extremely pitiable; and they might contrive to make it appear much leſs than it is. For affectation and obſtinacy can ſupport ſome, for a time at leaſt, in bearing a great deal, and calling it a trifle: but whatever trifles the pleaſures and the pains of this life may be, the felicity reſerved for good perſons in another, and the puniſhment to be inflicted (and which our conſciences tell us will be juſtly inflicted), on ſuch as have perverted and abuſed their own natures, injured their fellow-creatures, diſobeyed the commands, and defeated the purpoſes of their Creator; theſe things muſt be of moment unſpeakable; and which of them ſhall be our lot, abſolutely depends on the uſe we make of the ſpace allowed us here. How greatly doth it concern us then, carefully and frequently to examine what ſhare we have *wrought of the works of him that ſent us*; and to recollect, how ſoon *the night* may and muſt *come, in which no man can work* *.

To know the former, we muſt ſearch, through the wide extent of the divine law, into our performances and our deficiencies; whether we have uniformly expreſſed towards our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, that reverence and love, that reſignation and thankfulneſs, that hatred of ſin, and

* John ix. 4.

and univerſality of obedience, which their authority over us, and goodneſs to us, ſo ſtrongly require; whether, on all occaſions in common life, we have been ſo juſt and upright, ſo mild and forgiving, ſo charitable and bountiful, ſo friendly and compaſſionate, ſo faithful and attentive to the various duties of our ſeveral ſtations and relations, as we know we ought; whether, laſtly, in the government of ourſelves we have been ſo obſervant of purity and decency, ſo temperate and abſtinent, ſo indifferent about things below compared with thoſe above, as becomes beings deſigned to ſuſtain the character of rational, moral, religious, Chriſtian. If we have not, and moſt certainly we have not, can we truly ſay, that we have repented and thrown ourſelves on God's mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, and are ſtill in a penitent and believing ſtate? Unleſs this be ſo, the one thing needful is hitherto undone; and even if it be done, yet how much employment is there ſtill upon our hands, to perfect our humiliation for what is paſt, and undo, as far as we can, all the evil that we have ever done, and perhaps have been doing for a long time, againſt our fellow-creatures, as well as in the ſight of God! Not only our external behaviour, but the inward principles of it, muſt be continually reformed: all our bad inclinations firſt be detected, which is no eaſy taſk, then gradually ſubdued, which is a very hard one; eſpecially when we have ſuffered them by indulgence to ſtrengthen their original hold on our hearts. They cannot be extirpated in this life; they will frequently rebel, and yet muſt be always overcome. But this is not the whole. Further ſtill, every Chriſtian virtue, every qualification preſcribed in the word of God, muſt be planted in our ſouls, tenderly cheriſhed, and inceſſantly carried on towards maturity. For it is only *if theſe things be in us and abound,* that *an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto us abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour* *. How little we have of ſome of them, how much too little of all, we cannot be totally ignorant. But we ſhall never know, as we ought, and yet leſs be able to ſupply our defects, unleſs we are both enlightened and ſtrengthened by the grace of God. Have we then prayed and laboured for this;

* 2 Pet. i. 8, 11.

this; and have we obtained it; and are we making a proper uſe of it? Without it our hope of amendment is vain; and even with it, ſo much is wanting to be done, that we have by no means any time to throw away.

For, alas, what is the time of man upon earth? The whole of it ſhort; a great part of it neceſſarily filled up with things not related, or very remotely, to our main buſineſs; perhaps, if not certainly, much the greateſt part already paſt, and irrecoverably gone; ſo paſt, it may be, as to encreaſe both our work, and the difficulties of it, in the remainder. That remainder alſo will fly as ſpeedily; and, unleſs we take care, as unprofitably too, as what preceded. And how ſmall a remnant it may prove to thoſe, who have ſeemingly the beſt reaſons for making themſelves large promiſes, we can never know, amidſt the perpetual accidents that cut off ſuch great numbers in the prime of their days; and are many of them too ſudden to leave room, even for that miſerable comfort, a death-bed repentance.

It appears very harſh, and is extremely painful, to give people, in a dangerous ſickneſs, the ſlighteſt intimation how little this remedy is likely to avail them; and therefore they ought to be the more frequently and ſtrongly reminded of it, whilſt they may hear it with leſs terror, and greater benefit. A preſumptuous or thoughtleſs mortal, lives negligently and ſinfully year after year, in hopes of repenting of his ſins, when he comes to the end of his days; that is, doth a multitude of ill actions, in hopes that hereafter he ſhall heartily wiſh he had never done them. Can this be? Are ſuch perſons in earneſt? No: but they are trying, if poſſible, to cheat God and themſelves at the ſame time; to diſobey his will ſo artfully, as to avoid puniſhment, and obtain reward. Now what imaginable proſpect is there, that from a heart ſo deliberately falſe, any true repentance will ever come? Beſides, what certainty is there, that any one will have time allowed him, or that his underſtanding will not fail, or that he will not grow hardened inſtead of penitent; or indeed, that he ſhall have ſpirits and attention ſufficient, in the midſt of pain, and ſickneſs, and languor, to recollect his numerous tranſgreſſions, and to apply earneſtly for pardon. If he hath, undoubtedly it is the beſt and only thing that he can do for himſelf; and

omitting it is making a very bad caſe greatly worſe. But ſtill, to be grieved for our ſins only when we can live no longer in them, and are afraid of being immediately condemned for them, is a very ſuſpicious kind of ſorrow: and moreover, it is not to mere ſorrow that God hath promiſed forgiveneſs, nor to mere faith; but to ſuch only as will produce amendment, for which, in theſe circumſtances, there is little or no room. Nor can either by-ſtanders, or the dying man himſelf, know in the leaſt, whether it would produce any, were a longer life to be granted; or whether he would not relapſe, as thouſands of others, notwithſtanding the moſt promiſing appearances, have done, into his former wickedneſs. And therefore no one can, on ſure grounds, either adminiſter comfort to others, or take it to himſelf, in ſuch a caſe, how dreadful ſoever it will be to have none in that hour, when we ſhall want it moſt.

Since therefore our preparation muſt be made before our end com[illegible], which will come ſoon, and may come when we think of it leaſt, how vigilant ſhould we be not to ſpend any of our time in ſin, and how unwilling to ſpend more than is neceſſary in trifles; how ſtudious to make our common employments in life conſiſtent with, and ſubſervient to, our *heavenly calling* *; how careful to be always in readineſs, to have *our loins girded, and our lights burning, like men that wait for their Lord* †; *leſt, coming ſuddenly, he find us ſleeping* ‡. How frequently ſhould we imagine ourſelves in the condition in which we muſt be ſhortly; when the pleaſures, the profits, the pre-eminences, that we have purſued ſo eagerly, will vaniſh into nothing; when the duties that we have ſlighted ſo boldly, will appear the moſt important of all things; and the only firm ſupport will be, *that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world* §. Why ſhould we not think now, as we certainly ſhall then? Why ſhould we not act now, as we ſhall wiſh from the bottom of our hearts we had done; and wiſh in vain hereafter for what at preſent is undoubtedly feaſible, and but moderately difficult?

Such

* Heb. iii. 1. † Luke xii. 35, 36. ‡ Mark xiii. 36. § 2 Cor. i. 12.

Such reflections as theſe may be diſagreeable to us, but they will become very ſupportable. God, in great mercy, hath framed us ſo, that the conſideration of mortality, however awful, is not too ſtrong for us. We can look upon it without overpowering our faculties, and turn our thoughts from it with eaſe to the daily buſineſs, and even amuſements of life. But it would be a moſt unworthy and pernicious return, becauſe he doth not force it upon our minds conſtantly, which would unfit us for this world, therefore to lay it out of them entirely, or ſo near it as to neglect providing for the next. And the more averſe any one is from meditating on theſe things, the more needful it is for him. Not thinking of death will ward it off never the longer, but only make it infinitely terrible when it comes; and thinking of it effectually will bring it never the ſooner, but only diſpoſe us to wait for it in peace, and receive it with calm reſignation, if not with joy. *O that men were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end**.

2. The ſhortneſs of this life, when we view it as an introduction to another, beſides proving, in the ſtrongeſt manner, the neceſſity of diligence in our duty, gives alſo the greateſt encouragement to perſevere in it, againſt all difficulties and temptations.

Indeed the pains that we take to lay aſide our faults, and cultivate our virtues, will ſeldom fail to reward themſelves plentifully even here, by *the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs*†. But were it commonly otherwiſe; were the yoke of our Maſter heavy, and his burden grievous, it is not long that we have to bear it. The warfare againſt our ſpiritual enemies; the ſorrow of being too often unſucceſsful in it; the watchfulneſs over our bad inclinations; the painfulneſs of ſelf-denial; the ridicule and cenſure of *a world* that *lieth in wickedneſs*‡; all this will ſoon be paſt, and we ſhall *receive the end of our faith* and obedience, *the ſalvation of our ſouls* §. If the other life were very diſtant, and *the crown of glory* ‖ not to be given us, till we had been ſome hundreds of years, like the ancient patriarchs, *fighting the good fight* ¶, and *enduring*

* Deut. xxxii. 29. † Heb. xii. 11. ‡ 1 John v. 19.
§ 1 Pet. i. 9. ‖ 1 Pet. v. 4. ¶ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

hardneſs, as good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt *, it were leſs wonder, if *any ſhould grow weary, and faint in their minds* †: but ſince the days of our trial are thus few, and eternal felicity is annexed to ſo ſhort a ſtruggle, we may cheerfully *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering, and provoke one another to love and good works; and ſo much the more* continually, *as we ſee the day approaching* ‡. *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the huſbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye alſo patient; ſtabliſh your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh* §.

And as the nearneſs of another ſtate leſſens very conſiderably the difficulties of virtue, ſo doth it alſo the advantages of ſin; which indeed are ſeldom real, even here, but much the contrary, were all duly conſidered, whatever bad men imagine, *whom their own wickedneſs blinds* ‖, as they well deſerve it ſhould. But ſuppoſing them ever ſo often in the right, the utmoſt benefit they can receive is but for the preſent life, it may be, for a very ſmall part of it: and all that we can poſſibly get or loſe, enjoy or ſuffer in this world, bears no proportion to that which is to come. Indeed whatever muſt have an end, can bear no proportion to that which hath none. And conſequently, were we to live ever ſo long, provided we were to die at all, there could be no reaſonable compariſon between our intereſt in the preſent life and the future: but when the preſent not only ought in reaſon to be looked on as nothing, but ſhews itſelf to our very ſenſes to be as nothing; when we can ſo eaſily reckon up the few years it is compoſed of, *the bounds appointed, which it cannot paſs* ¶; even then to let ourſelves be cheated with it, and the poor falſe promiſes it makes us; and for theſe to quit the hopes of an immortality, juſt ready to be conferred on us, the bleſſedneſs of which exceeds our imagination, and will be continually increaſing for ever; this is what nothing, but the melancholy experience of it, could make one believe was poſſible. But ſo the fact ſtands. Men give up eternity in exchange for a moment: here

* 2 Tim. ii. 3. † Heb xii. 3. ‡ Heb. x. 23—25.
§ James v. 7, 8. ‖ Wiſd. xi. 21. ¶ Job xiv. 5.

here they will have their portion, whatſoever ſhall come after. And though they muſt know, would they think at all, that *the judgment of the* wicked *lingereth not, and their damnation doth not ſlumber* *; yet either they fly from the conviction, or they harden themſelves againſt it; and deſperately reſolve, that nothing, but what is preſent, ſhall make any impreſſion upon them; whereas, in juſt reckoning, every thing preſent ſhould be regarded almoſt only as it promotes or obſtructs our preparation for futurity. Faithfulneſs to our duty ſhould be our whole concern; and what we may ſuffer here by doing it, or gain here by tranſgreſſing it, ſhould be accounted very inſignificant; as we certainly ſhall account it, if once we obtain from God the ſkill of *numbering our days* aright.

3. The laſt uſe which I ſhall mention, of conſidering how ſoon this life will terminate in another, is, that we ſhould ſupport ourſelves with the proſpect of being happy ſhortly, under all that may afflict us in the mean while.

Indeed, were there to be no future ſtate, the misfortunes of the preſent would be much the more tolerable for ending ſo ſoon: but ſtill, loſing the comforts of it would then be loſing our all; and going through it in miſery, would embitter our whole exiſtence. Now, were the ſpace of it more or leſs, yet being the whole, we could have nothing to make us amends for our diſappointments and ſufferings, or to exalt us above them. Death indeed would free us, earlier or later, and ſo far be a remedy; but a very gloomy one, were all to end there; ſuch a one as moſt people would think worſe than the diſeaſe, and be, *through fear of* it, *all their lifetime ſubject to bondage* †. But now, as the intereſts of this world are only a ſmall part of our concern, they deſerve only a ſmall part of our conſideration; and as the concluſion of the preſent ſcene is immediately followed by a ſecond, which ſhall never conclude, it furniſhes out to us a triumph over its own terrors. *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, where is thy victory* ‡?

Bad perſons indeed can derive no comfort from hence; for the end of their worldly ſorrows, is the beginning of infinitely more dreadful ones. But if we are ſincerely pious and

* 2 Pet. ii. 3. † Heb. ii. 15. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 55.

virtuous, the croſſes and troubles, under which we may labour here, the parting with our friends, the provocations of our enemies, poverty and contempt, ſickneſs and pain, the weariſomeneſs of old age, the feebleneſs of decaying nature, whatever can be grievous to us, will not only ſoon be ſucceeded by happineſs, but will increaſe that happineſs unſpeakably, provided we only bear it with a dutiful patience for this little interval. *Now therefore, why diſquieteſt thou thyſelf, ſeeing thou art but a corruptible man? and why art thou moved, whereas thou art but mortal? and why haſt thou not conſidered the thing that is to come, rather than that which is preſent* *?

We cannot indeed, through the original weakneſs of our depraved faculties, be ſo much cheered by theſe conſiderations as we have cauſe; and we ſhould not deſpair upon it; but we may be cheered by them much more than we are; and we ſhould endeavour it to the utmoſt; aſſuring ourſelves, that in our future ſtate, we ſhall ſmile at recollecting the heavieſt calamities of this, with much more contempt than we always do, in our maturer years, at remembering the petty afflictions of our childhood.

Let us reſolve then, that we will try to *take*, even *joyfully*, not only the loſſes of this world, *knowing that we have in heaven a better, and an enduring ſubſtance* †; but alſo the *diſſolution of this tabernacle*, ſince *when we are unclothed, we ſhall be clothed upon with an houſe eternal, and mortality be ſwallowed up of life* ‡. Let us, under all preſſures, of whatever kind, *look up, and lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh* §; and contentedly *wait all the days of our appointed time, till our change come* ‖; never *caſting away that confidence which hath great recompence of reward; for yet a little while, and he that ſhall come will come, and will not tarry* ¶. Theſe reflections let us familiarize to ourſelves; and learn from them to fix our hearts, not on ſuch unworthy objects as we are ſubject to be diſappointed about every moment, whilſt we have them, and muſt at fartheſt, in a few years, undergo the final diſappointment of parting with them for ever; but extend

* 2 Eſdr. vii. 15, 16. † Heb. x. 34. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 1—4.
§ Luke xxi. 28. ‖ Job xiv. 14. ¶ Heb. x. 35, 37.

and our ambition to nobler views; and ſince we are made for eternity, become ſuperior both to the pleaſures and the griefs of time; that being neither ſeduced by the one, nor dejected by the other, we may go on with a ſteady and cheerful attention to our preſent duty, and our approaching bliſs; till the *few and evil days of our pilgrimage* * being ended, we may have our conſummation in peace; and be admitted everlaſting inhabitants of that *city, which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God* †.

* Gen. xlvii. 9. † Heb. xi. 10.

SER-

SERMON CVIII.

The Certainty of the Communication of Divine (though Invisible) Influences to Good Men.

John xv. 26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he ſhall teſtify of me.

THE bleſſings which we have received from the Sovereign Lord of all, are either the original ones of creation and providence, or the ſuperadded one of redemption from ſin and miſery. The former ſort are in ſome meaſure diſcoverable by reaſon, but much more fully made known by revelation; of the latter our whole knowledge is from revelation alone. But being, through its means, once acquainted with thoſe new relations, in which God's mercy to fallen man hath placed us, and with the new obligations to which they ſubject us, it is no leſs criminal to diſregard this part of religion than the other, ſince not only the foundation of it, in the truth of things, is equally real, but its importance to our happineſs, if poſſible, greater. And the ſeveral perſons of the Sacred Trinity having manifeſted their love to us, by concurring in our recovery, and conducting and executing, according to the diſpoſition of infinite wiſdom, their ſeveral ſhares of that gracious work; we are conſequently bound to diſtinct acts of faith and duty towards each; the performance of which, agreeably to the direction of God's word, conſtitutes the peculiar duty of a Chriſtian. Amongſt theſe, the preſent ſeaſon leads us to conſider, what offices the Holy Ghoſt hath condeſcended to execute for our ſalvation. And as they conſiſt partly in teſtifying to us outwardly the certainty of our religion,

religion, partly in moving us inwardly to be affected by it as we ought, I ſhall diſcourſe now on the former of theſe points, by laying before you,

I. More generally, the teſtimony given by the bleſſed Spirit, in ſucceſſive ages, to divine truths; above all to the grant of a Saviour to mankind.

II. In a more particular manner, that ever memorable confirmation, vouchſafed, as on this day, to the doctrine of the goſpel, by his deſcending on the apoſtles, and enduing them with miraculous gifts; of which I ſhall prove the reality, and draw from it proper inferences. For it will be uſeful to put *you in remembrance of theſe things, though ye know them, and be eſtabliſhed in the preſent truth* *.

I. Firſt then, I ſhall lay before you, more generally and briefly, the teſtimony given by the Spirit, in ſucceſſive ages, to divine truths.

Prophecy, as St. *Peter* obſerves, *came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God ſpake, as they were moved, by the Holy Ghoſt* †. Accordingly we find in multitudes of places, from the earlieſt book of ſcripture to the lateſt, ſupernatural impulſes and illuminations aſcribed to the Spirit of God ‡: nor can we doubt therefore, but they proceeded from him always, though ſometimes it is not expreſsly affirmed. So that we are to honour the third perſon as the immediate inward inſtructor of men from the foundation of the world; as him who hath admoniſhed, reproved, and ſtriven with the wicked; who hath warmed and cheered the hearts of the pious in all times, with manifeſtations of God's will, with declarations of his favour, with precautions againſt unſeen dangers, with promiſes of deliverance from the heavieſt afflictions, with his preſence and guidance in the moſt intricate difficulties. But as the principal demonſtration of the goodneſs of Heaven, was the purpoſe of ſending our bleſſed Lord into the world, this moſt important diſpenſation it was the peculiar care of the Holy Spirit to notify; giving firſt ſuch darker and leſs explicit intimations of it, as however

* 2 Pet. i. 12. † 2 Pet. i. 21.

‡ Gen. vi. 3. xli. 38. Numb. xi. 25, 26. xxiv. 2. 1 Sam. x. 10. 2 Kings ii. 9, &c. 1 Chr. xii. 18. 2 Chr. xv. 1. Neh. ix. 30. Ezek. ii. 2. Zech. vii. 12. Rev. i. 10. ii. 7. iv. 2, &c.

ever ſufficiently anſwered the neceſſities of mankind; then gradually unfolding and opening the ſeveral particulars of the ſcheme, ſo as that every generation might be bleſſed with ſome new acceſſion of light and comfort beyond the former; and that, by duly proportioned intervals, *the day might dawn, the day-ſtar ariſe* *, then at length *the Sun of Righteouſneſs* † ſhine forth; at which time all the variety of types and prophecies, and all the intricate ſteps of Providence through all ages, ſhould plainly appear to point out and centre in this one great event, and undeniably ſhew, that *known unto the Lord are all his works from the beginning* ‡.

Now therefore *the fulneſs of time being come* §, and the circumſtances of things fitly diſpoſed, the next operation of the Spirit of God, for our redemption, was the ſupernatural conception of the promiſed Saviour ‖; on whom he afterwards deſcended like a dove at his baptiſm ¶; led him into the wilderneſs to triumph over the tempter **; and ſo conducted the man *Jeſus* through his whole ſtate of humiliation, that all he ſaid and did is repreſented in ſcripture as proceeding from this influence; and thoſe mighty works of his, which bore witneſs of him, are to be conſidered as repeated teſtimonies of the Spirit on his behalf. Thus he himſelf hath taught us, laying claim to the words of *Iſaiah*: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: for he hath anointed me to preach the goſpel to the poor; he hath ſent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of ſight to the blind* ††. And again, *If I by the Spirit of God do caſt out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you* ‡‡. And in like manner St. *Peter*: *That word, which was publiſhed through all Judea, ye know; how God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed of the devil; for God was with him* §§. But beſides the miracles which he performed before his death, the New Teſtament, according to the common, and I think true interpretation, aſcribes alſo to the ſame divine agent that great miracle and foundation of our faith, his riſing again;

* 2 Pet. i. 19. † Mal. iv. 2. ‡ Acts xv. 18. § Gal. iv. 4.
‖ Matth. i. 18. ¶ Matth. iii. 16. ** Matth. iv. 1.
†† Iſ. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. ‡‡ Matt. xii. 28. §§ Acts x. 37, 38.

again; where he is ſaid by St. *Paul* to have been *declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holineſs, by the reſurrection from the dead* *; and by St. *Peter* to have been *put to death in the fleſh, but quickened by the Spirit* †.

Thus then it appears in general, that from the earlieſt times *the Spirit of prophecy was the teſtimony of Jeſus* ‡; and bore witneſs to his goſpel by continual ſigns and wonders, during his abode on earth. I now proceed,

II. To that particular confirmation of it, by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt on his apoſtles, which he foretells, in the text and elſewhere, ſhould follow his leaving the world; and which produced effects ſo greatly ſuperior to all preceding atteſtations, that the Holy Ghoſt is ſaid in ſcripture not to have been given, or as other copies read it, not to have been before §; meaning comparatively; and in reſpect, not of his exiſtence, but his operations on believers.

Now theſe were reſerved, for ſeveral good reaſons, till after our Saviour's aſcenſion. It was prophefied of him, that *when he aſcended up on high, he ſhould lead captivity captive;* ſubject to himſelf multitudes who had been ſlaves to the wicked one; and, as the means of doing this, ſhould *receive gifts for, and give them unto men* ‖: which prediction St. *Paul* expreſsly quotes ¶, and St. *Peter* ſurely alludes to it, when he ſaith, *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, he hath ſhed forth this, which ye now ſee and hear* **. It was a proper beginning of the exerciſe of that authority, with which he had been ſo lately inveſted; and a new and moſt ſeaſonable proof of it, eſpecially to his poor diſciples, who muſt extremely have wanted comfort under the loſs of his perſonal preſence. Now no comfort could be ſo reviving, as to find the tokens of his power even increaſed by his abſence, and themſelves enlightened with greater knowledge of truth, and ſtrengthened with more ability of performing mighty deeds, than when *he went in and out amongſt them* ††. Beſides, now they were to go immediately on their unparalleled

* Rom. i. 4. † 1 Pet. iii. 18. ‡ Rev. xix. 10.
§ John vii. 39. Comp. Acts xix. 2. ‖ Pſ. lxviii. 11.
¶ Eph. iv. 8. ** Acts ii. 33. †† Acts i. 21.

enterprise, the conversion of mankind; and therefore now, and not before, it was time they should be furnished with the miraculous qualifications requisite for that purpose.

Accordingly, *when the day of Pentecost*, the tenth after the ascension, *was fully come*, a festival, at which the Jews and proselytes of all countries and languages resorted to Jerusalem, besides that large numbers of them usually dwelt there, the apostles *were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing wind; and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance* *. There were, it seems, a few inconsiderate creatures, as the sort is too common, who found matter of ridicule in this, and *mocking, said, These men are full of new wine* †. But the very imagination, that twelve serious men should, every one of them, be so unaccountably overtaken, at so unlikely an hour too as nine in the morning, was incredible and absurd, as St. *Peter* well observed ‡, whose speech, made instantly on the occasion, in the *words of truth and soberness* §, if ever any was, would alone abundantly have confuted the charge, even though he had not named it. And yet a farther confutation was (and there could not be a stronger), that the foreigners present must know, whether the languages they heard were real ones; and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea must some of them know, whether they, who spoke them, had ever learnt them; and the result was, not that they were detected, but that *three thousand souls were added to them the same day* ‖; and the numbers increased continually ¶.

In this chapter of the Acts indeed there is mention only of the single gift of tongues, as being the most remarkable in itself, and most immediately exercised. But from the whole of their history it appears, that the apostles were entrusted, and doubtless at the same time, with various other supernatural endowments; as their Lord had promised them, that they should do the same, *and* even *greater works* than he, *because he*

* Acts ii. 1—4. † Ver. 13. ‡ Ver. 15.
§ Acts xxvi. 25. ‖ Acts ii. 41. ¶ Ver. 47.

he went unto his Father *. And beſides the powers, of which many inferior diſciples partook with them, there was one peculiar to them; that, by prayer and impoſition of hands, they were able to communicate the gifts of ſpeaking with tongues, and performing miracles, to whom they thought proper. Once indeed, in the extraordinary and new caſe of *Cornelius*, *the Holy Ghoſt fell*, without human interpoſition, *on all which heard the word* preached †, as he had done at firſt on the apoſtles; that the whole world might be fully convinced of what the Jews were very backward to believe, that *to the Gentiles alſo God had granted repentance unto life* ‡, ſince he had *given his Spirit to them, even as he did unto others, putting no difference between them* §. And thus did the Comforter teſtify, not only the truth of Chriſtianity in general, but our title, who are deſcended from Heathens, to a ſhare in the bleſſings of it; without which teſtimony perhaps we had *ſat to this day in darkneſs, and the ſhadow of death* ‖. But ſtill, ordinarily ſpeaking, that the ſuperior dignity of the apoſtles might be preſerved, and by its means the unity of the church, and the purity of the faith, theſe miraculous gifts were conveyed only through their hands, to ſuch perſons, as by illumination from above, they ſaw to be qualified for them.

Thus then, to ſpeak in the terms of St. *Paul*, *to one* man *was given by the Spirit the word of wiſdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gifts of healing, to another the working of* other *miracles, to another prophecy, to another diſcerning of ſpirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues; but all theſe wrought that one and the ſelf ſame Spirit, dividing to every man ſeverally as he willed* ¶. And now, imagine a church of Chriſtians, under the conduct of ſome of our Lord's immediate diſciples, and exhibiting to the world around them ſuch gifts as theſe. Repreſent to yourſelves, firſt, a number of plain unlearned men delivering a doctrine, perfectly worthy of God, and ſuited to the nature and condition of mankind; evidently and vaſtly more ſo, than all the diſcoveries of unaſſiſted reaſon, in all ages, put together, had been able to furniſh; profeſſing

 themſelves

* John xiv. 12. † Acts x. 44. ‡ Acts xi. 18.
§ Acts xv. 8, 9. ‖ Luke i. 79. ¶ 1 Cor. xii. 8—11.

themſelves to have received, and been charged to ſpread it through the earth, by a perſon of a character abſolutely faultleſs; whoſe birth and actions, and every thing material that befell him, had been gradually foretelling ever ſince the creation, and all came to paſs accordingly; whom, in farther confirmation of his authority, they had ſeen, for years, performing daily miracles of the higheſt power, and the tendereſt goodneſs; whom they had ſeen ſupporting the reality of his miſſion, by calmly delivering himſelf up, and ſuffering death on the croſs; whom yet afterwards they frequently beheld alive, and converſed with, till at length, while they ſtood by him, a cloud received him into heaven: Suppoſing them all to perſiſt unanimouſly in this account, without any poſſible intereſt to ſerve by it, and with the hourly danger of being detected, if what they ſaid was falſe; to have continually before their eyes, and one after another to undergo, at conſiderable diſtances of time, with the utmoſt cheerfulneſs, every thing that can be dreadful to human creatures, merely for aſſerting theſe facts, and behaving ſuitably to them: ſuch a teſtimony to ſuch a religion, muſt ſurely, without any additional proof, appear thoroughly convincing to every honeſt and reaſonable mind. But leſt, after all, it ſhould be thought poſſible, that theſe witneſſes might either, by ſome ſtrange means, be all deceived in every one of the above-mentioned evidences, or all agree (though one ſees not why they ſhould, or how with any ſucceſs they could), to deceive others in them, let it be farther ſuppoſed, that from being ignorant and ſlow of underſtanding, as they notoriouſly were, they now of a ſudden *ſpeak with a wiſdom and a ſpirit*, which their adverſaries *are not able to reſiſt* *; that from being exceedingly timorous mortals, they are likewiſe of a ſudden, when there is more ground for fear than ever, become totally void of fear, and rejoice to ſuffer in defence of their cauſe: that being well known neither to have enjoyed opportunities of learning in their own country, nor yet to have travelled out of it; well known to have had, a few weeks before, no other dialect than their native ruſtic idiom of Galilee (which they had not ſkill enough to diſguiſe, when they would have wiſhed

* Acts vi. 10.

ed it moſt, but were betrayed by their ſpeech, and found out for what they were); that theſe, quickly after, are qualified to diſcourſe fluently and properly with men of all the different nations of the world, and that *each hears them ſpeak, in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God* *; that, farther ſtill, they can foretell things future, diſcern the very ſecrets of mens hearts, heal diſeaſes, raiſe the dead, inflict miraculous puniſhments on their oppoſers; in a word, can work all the wonders which they affirm their Maſter to have wrought; and, which is more, enable others, altogether ſtrangers to them, immediately on their believing, to work the ſame: what can there be wanting to ſatisfy every examiner completely; and whence can theſe things proceed, but from the power of the Divine Spirit?

Now ſuch were the proofs on which the firſt Chriſtians aſſert they received their religion: and their very reception of it, notwithſtanding ſuch prejudices of education againſt it, and threatening diſcouragements from it, is the ſtrongeſt preſumption, that the arguments urged to them were convincing, and their belief undeniably true. It is an acknowledged fact, that Chriſtianity ſpread, in a very few years, through every nation then known, and that multitudes of every rank embraced it. Now, by what poſſible means could a faith, ſo entirely oppoſite to the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtitions of all countries, and the favourite vices of all the inhabitants of them, be thus propagated, in a knowing and inquiſitive age, by a handful of men, without learning and without power, againſt all the learning and power of the world, vigorouſly and without delay applied to withſtand it, but by ſuch teſtimonies of the Divine Spirit in its favour, as the firſt Chriſtians unanimouſly ſay attended its progreſs? Theſe afford a clear explication of this wonderful change; and fair inquiry will ſhew that nothing elſe can. It is eaſy to pick out little cavils, nay indeed to raiſe very plauſible objections here and there, againſt the evidence of any thing. It is eaſier ſtill to get a few general phraſes of enthuſiaſm, and bigotry, and impoſture, and credulity, and throw them about at random. But let any unbeliever take only the undoubted facts, relating to Chriſtianity

* Acts ii. 8, 11.

in its firſt riſe, and try to ſolve them upon his principles, entering into particulars, and he will find it impracticable, not only to give any account atteſted by hiſtory, how they did happen (though that he ought to do), but even any gueſs or imaginary ſuppoſition how they could happen, if our religion be falſe, that will not be full of infinitely greater difficulties and incredibilities, than he can pretend to allege againſt the truth of it. And therefore either the goſpel prevailed by theſe miracles, for which we contend, or its prevailing without them was the moſt amazing miracle of all.

But beſides this way of reaſoning, to prove that there muſt have been ſuch gifts, we have direct hiſtorical evidence, that there actually were ſuch.

Indeed what you have already heard concerning them, from the Acts of the Apoſtles, carries with it very ſufficient authority. For that book was the work of an author who lived at the time, and had means of being well acquainted with what he relates, and could have no temptation to write falſehoods; and was allowed, by thoſe who muſt know, to have written truth. But the argument from St. *Paul's* epiſtles appears to be ſomewhat ſtronger yet: And the ſtrength of it lies in this narrow compaſs, that they were certainly written by him, and immediately received, and highly eſteemed, by the ſeveral churches to whom they are directed; that in them he mentions frequently the ſupernatural gifts of the Spirit, as then ſubſiſting in thoſe churches; that he would not have dared to do this, had there been no ſuch thing; or if he had, he and his letters could never have been reſpected, as they certainly were.

For the firſt point, that theſe epiſtles are really his, we have the ſtrongeſt external evidence imaginable; the teſtimony of ſome of his contemporaries, of many who lived immediately after him, and the univerſal conſent of mankind. But the internal marks and characters of their being genuine, are, if poſſible, yet more convincing to a judge of ſuch matters. There is an evident air and look of truth and preciſeneſs preſerved throughout them. The numbers of perſons, on various occaſions, named in them; the minute directions and orders that are ſent; the obſcurity of ſeveral paſſages, occaſioned by their referring to queſtions aſked and accounts of things

given

given by the churches; and to their preſent ſituation, in one reſpect or another, are manifeſt tokens that they are what they profeſs to be. A writer of counterfeit pieces, would either be too artful to venture into ſuch particulars, or muſt have failed in ſome of them. But then the reception of them by the congregations to which they are inſcribed, completes the impoſſibility of a fraud. Suppoſe an impoſtor to draw up letters of a conſiderable length to ſuch and ſuch ſocieties, churches for inſtance, relating to many of their members and acquaintance, and to many things, of many ſorts, done, believed, or debated amongſt them, and not to make in any one of theſe a ſingle miſtake, which is quite inconceivable; yet, when theſe performances came into the hands of theſe perſons, pretending in the title to have been ſent to them or their fathers, not many years before, can it be imagined they will all agree to receive them as ſuch, though till then they had neither original, nor copy, nor memory, nor tradition of them? A falſe hiſtory may creep ſilently into the world, and obtain credit by degrees. A falſe collection of letters may impoſe on ſtrangers, remote in place or time: But that the very men, or body of men, to whom they declare themſelves to have been written a little while ago, and who abſolutely know nothing of their ever being written to them at all, ſhould believe in them, is utterly inconceivable; and ſtill more ſo, if theſe letters affirm ſuch extraordinary things to be then doing amongſt them, as could not have been forgotten, if they had been done, and yet are not remembered. Now it never was, or can be denied, that St. *Paul's* epiſtles were admitted as his, and honoured as ſacred, were continually read and quoted, both in private and public, by thoſe churches, of which they bear the names, not ſome ages after his death, for then there might have been colour for a charge of impoſition, but from his own days downwards. Nay, if we allow the teſtimony of early and venerable writers, his originals themſelves were preſerved there (a thing by no means unlikely) to following generations.

Now in theſe epiſtles, thus proved authentic, the miraculous operations of the Holy Ghoſt appear to have been common amongſt Chriſtians. The workers of miracles, they who ſpoke with tongues, who propheſied, who had the gift of healing,

healing, are mentioned there as familiarly as the apoſtles, elders, and teachers. Nay farther, as the exerciſe of ſome of theſe powers in the church, it ſeems, was irregular ſometimes, and made confuſion, there are many directions laid down by the apoſtle for the regulation of it. And farther ſtill, becauſe the perſons endued with them were too apt to value themſelves, and be valued by others, immoderately on account of them, he inſiſts very much, in the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, on the preferableneſs of *charity*, that is, of love to God and man, before *ſpeaking with the tongues of men and angels*, before *prophecy*, before the *faith that could remove mountains* *. Is it poſſible now, that all this ſhould be written to, and received and reſpected by perſons who had no ſuch gifts amongſt them? Is it poſſible alſo, that St. *Paul*, when, as we find in theſe very letters, he had rivals and enemies in theſe churches, men of intereſt and influence, of art and ſubtlety, ſhould, in the face of them all, appeal, as he doth, to miracles performed by himſelf and others, for a proof of his authority and doctrine, before their eyes, if in reality neither he, nor any one elſe, had ever performed any? Obſerve how he expoſtulates with the Galatians on the danger of their apoſtatizing from the goſpel to the law. *O fooliſh Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not obey the truth? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit*, the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, *by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? He that miniſtereth the Spirit to you, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or the hearing of faith* †? Again, he boldly pleads to the Judaiſing Roman converts, thoſe things *which Chriſt had wrought by him to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty ſigns and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God* ‡. And when, amongſt the Corinthians, his apoſtleſhip had been queſtioned by ſome, his anſwer is, *Truly the ſigns of an apoſtle were wrought among you in wonders and mighty deeds* §. And from the conſciouſneſs which he had of the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, he threatens to *come to them* again *ſhortly, and know, not the ſpeech of them, which are puffed up, but the power. For*

* 1 Cor. xii. 1, 2. † Gal. iii. 1, 2, 5. ‡ Rom. xv. 18, 19. § 2 Cor. xii. 12.

For the kingdom of God, he adds, *is not in word, but in power**; agreeably to what he had told them in a preceding chapter, that *his* own *preaching had not been with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the Spirit and of power, that their faith might ſtand, not in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God*†. Now, as it muſt be not only imprudence, but madneſs in him, to ſpeak of theſe things, if they were not true, ſo his ſpeaking of them could not but have produced the entire rejection of his epiſtles and himſelf, if the ſeveral churches had not known them to be true. And therefore, ſince theſe churches did continue to reverence him and them as of more than human authority, it follows, that theſe operations and miracles were both real and frequent amongſt all Chriſtians in general. For even when he was congratulating the illuſtrious church of *Corinth* on her gifts, he doth not hint to her (many and great as we know they were) that ſhe was before, but only *not behind others* in that reſpect‡.

And now what remains is, that being ſatisfied of the certainty of theſe things, we lay ſeriouſly to heart the proper inferences from them; which are indeed too many to be enlarged on at preſent, but happily too plain to need it. In general, it follows, that the religion which we profeſs, is no other than the truth of God: the doctrines of it, however myſterious, reaſonable objects of firm belief; the precepts, however difficult, matter of indiſpenſable duty; its glorious rewards ſecure to every good perſon; its dreadful puniſhments unavoidable by every bad one. More particularly, in regard to that Spirit, which teſtifies theſe things, it follows, that we ſhould honour him, as poſſeſſed of thoſe divine attributes which they imply, and which the ſcripture aſcribes to him repeatedly; that we ſhould make our thankful acknowledgments for theſe his outward manifeſtations, and pray for his inward and ſaving influences on our ſouls; that we ſhould receive the goſpel more ſubmiſſively, and obey it more diligently, for his having ratified and confirmed it in ſo unparalleled a manner; often recollecting for this purpoſe that awful admonition: *If the word ſpoken by angels*, the law of Mo-

* 2 Cor. iv. 19, 20. † 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 7.

ſes, was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion received a juſt recompence of reward, how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation; which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt *. To whom, with the Father and the Son, &c.

* Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4.

SERMON CIX.

THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE AID BEING IMPARTED TO ALL MEN WHO FEAR GOD, AND ENDEAVOUR SERIOUSLY TO OBSERVE HIS MORAL PRECEPTS.

JOHN xiv. 15, 16, 17.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you.

OUR bleſſed Lord might very poſſibly deſign to comprehend, in this promiſe, all the benefits which the Holy Ghoſt was to confer on his followers. But his expreſſions plainly ſhew, that he had chiefly in view, not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, but the directing and comforting influences of his grace. For theſe alone are given to all, who *love Chriſt, and keep his commandments:* Theſe alone were to *abide with Chriſtians for ever:* Theſe alone *the world could not receive,* becauſe they would not ſuffer themſelves to *ſee* or *know them:* and though, in appearance, a leſs illuſtrious, they are, in reality, a more important gift than thoſe of tongues and miracles. For though the latter were powerful means of making religion believed, the former only can bring it to be practiſed; and therefore it is highly neceſſary to teach and inculcate the doctrine of inward grace; that men may earneſtly pray for it, faithfully uſe it, and heartily rejoice in it. Some indeed have abuſed the perſuaſion of *God's working in them*

to a neglect of *working out their own ſalvation* *. Some have miſtaken the feelings of an enthuſiaſtic warmth for teſtimonies of the Divine Spirit; ſome have done extravagant, and others wicked actions, under pretence of his direction. But as their aſcribing too much, can never warrant our aſcribing too little to his influence on our hearts; and error is beſt confuted, not by maintaining the oppoſite error, but by ſetting forth the truth, I ſhall therefore endeavour,

I. To ſhew the credibility of this influence from reaſon:

II. To give a more certain and full account of it from ſcripture:

III. To reconcile it with experience: And

IV. To make ſuitable inferences from the whole.

I. To ſhew its credibility from reaſon; which, however needleſs, if men regarded ſcripture as they ought, may be uſeful in diſpoſing them to regard it more than they do.

A little inſpection into ourſelves, will convince us what imperfect creatures we are, and how poorly qualified for the practice of piety and virtue. We have indeed, by nature, a general knowledge of our duty, and very juſt motives to it, with ſome diſpoſitions in its favour. But then, on the other hand, we have much inattention to religious truths, and great prejudices againſt them; we have many bad inclinations to miſlead us; we have an indolence that lets them eaſily prevail over us; we are in a world full of ill examples and vicious maxims of life; of enticements to unlawful pleaſures, provocations to immoderate reſentment, temptations to ambition, envy, covetouſneſs, every ſin. And ſometimes a number of theſe enemies are combined together ſo ſtrongly, and attack us ſo unprepared, that a much greater force than the ordinary powers of the human mind, would be very unlikely to ſtand againſt them. And when once they overcome us, every fall makes way for another; the ſenſibility of conſcience decays, good affections are ſtifled, wrong paſſions inflamed, wrong cuſtoms formed, and reaſon, habituated to be over-powered, yields at length without ſtruggle. Now, what is there to be expected, for the future, from men unaſſiſted in theſe circumſtances? It does not follow, indeed, that they will

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

will always go on uniformly to deſtruction, without ſome intervals of better purpoſes and endeavours. From time to time their eyes ſhall be opened, their fears alarmed, excellent reſolutions made, and, for a while, perſevered in moſt zealouſly. But too ſoon this fervour cools, our vigilance abates, a thouſand things happen to put us off our guard; and one thing alone, truſting in our own ſeeming ſtrength, is ſufficient to lull us into a ſecurity that will prove fatal. Sinful inclinations and habits always retain a ſtronger party within us than appears; and, when we leaſt think of it, ſnatch a favourable opportunity, and recover their empire, perhaps more abſolutely than before. After ſome experience of this kind, men come indeed to have leſs confidence in themſelves. But what is the uſual conſequence? Why, that not looking beyond themſelves, at the very time of forming good purpoſes, they ſcarce hope to keep them; and ſo their efforts grow daily more heartleſs and faint, till at laſt they become quite weary of the fruitleſs trouble; and, it may be, inſtead of trying any longer to be good, labour to perſuade themſelves, that they neither need, nor can be ſo.

This is plainly (aſk your hearts if it be not) the common courſe of things; the daily event of the combat between mere human virtue, and the trials which this world throws in its way. Yet all the while it is an evident truth, that the very end of our being is the practiſing of theſe duties, which we find ſo difficult, and the rooting out of theſe ſins, to which we feel ourſelves ſo prone. Now, what God hath made us for, he muſt ſome way have provided we ſhould be able to do, in ſuch meaſure as he will accept. He moſt clearly ſees the dangers to which we are expoſed, and the poor degree of ſtrength and preparation with which we meet them. The never-ceaſing influences of his providence preſerve and actuate every part of the material world. And can we imagine, that he, who is always taking care of all his other works, down to the very meaneſt things on this earth, will diſregard the moſt important thing in it, the eternal intereſts of the ſouls of men? It would be injuring his goodneſs, his holineſs, to think ſo.

It is true, beings endued with free will and choice, as we are, muſt not be acted on ſo as to deſtroy it, but ſuitably to their

their nature. And how many ſuch methods may there be within the reach of infinite wiſdom and power? He who hath given us all the inward principles we have, cannot he, at pleaſure, repair their decays, reſtrain their vehemence, rectify their diſorders? He who hath eſtabliſhed the ways by which his creatures communicate their minds one to another, muſt not he be able to communicate himſelf to them, when he judges it proper; to repreſent the beauty of goodneſs, the deformity of ſin; to ſuggeſt proper motives of duty and intereſt; to turn their attention from dangerous objects; to inſpire them with religious and virtuous affections; to bring into their minds juſt and wiſe rules of conduct; and all this at ſuch times as ſhall be moſt needful for our reformation, our ſafety, our improvement? Theſe inviſible operations of God in our minds, are plainly no more inconſiſtent with our liberty, than the ſecret or open perſuaſions of our fellow mortals are. And therefore it is perfectly credible, that as we, who have ſo little goodneſs, are prompted by it however to adviſe and aſſiſt each other, he, who is abſolutely good, will not refuſe his gracious help, in ſuch caſes as really want it; and eſpecially to ſuch perſons as humbly deſire it, and honeſtly make uſe of it; for careleſs and preſumptuous ſinners have by no means the ſame ground to hope for aid from a juſt and holy God. But to what degree he will either ſtrengthen the former, or admoniſh the latter, is entirely beyond human knowledge: only this we know, that he may do what he will with his own; and will do always what he ſees to be wiſeſt and beſt.

Nor is the perſuaſion of God's enlightening and aſſiſting men to perform their duty, a notion ſtarted in theſe later ages of the world; but, from early times, the beſt and moſt conſiderate, even of the Heathens, have held and taught this doctrine: and all men every where implicitly own it, by offering up prayers to Heaven for direction, how they ſhould act for help and ſucceſs in their attempts; of which prayers, the faith of a divine interpoſition is the only poſſible ground. Theſe things, put together, muſt ſurely, at leaſt, prepare us to receive more readily, and with more entire confidence in it, that fuller light, of which I now proceed

II. To give ſome account from ſcripture. There we are taught, that human nature is corrupt and degenerate, and no longer able to ſtand alone againſt the temptations which itſelf breeds; and yet leſs when they are ſtrengthened by the ſuggeſtions of wicked men, and of *our adverſary the devil, who as a roaring lion walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour**. That therefore our Maker, who ſtill requires obedience from his creatures, and yet doth not require impoſſibilities, hath from the beginning *ſtriven with* the bad†, and *inſtructed*‡ and *eſtabliſhed* § the good, *by his Spirit within them* ‖; though it was more abundantly poured forth when the goſpel was publiſhed: from which we learn, that *except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven* ¶: That by *the Spirit of adoption***, changing our nature and condition, we are entitled, *through faith in Chriſt*, to call God our Father: And that *if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, much more ſhall our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him* ††. Now, in this declaration, our bleſſed Redeemer evidently means, not giving his miraculous powers (which few in proportion ever had, and perhaps none ever preſumed to requeſt for themſelves), but his ſaving graces; which, to uſe the preceding words, *every one that ſeeketh findeth*; and which anſwer, in the ſpiritual life, to bread in the natural. Accordingly St. *Paul*, in the concluſion of his ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians, prays, that *the fellowſhip* or *communion*, the communication of the bleſſings *of the Holy Ghoſt, may be with them all*, as well as *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of God*. Certainly this means, not a benefit peculiar to a few in the primitive days, but an influence from the bleſſed Spirit on the ſoul, of which every true believer in every age might partake.

Thus then the Holy Ghoſt is given to all Chriſtians. And, as we are taught in the ſame ſcriptures more particularly, he *opens our underſtandings* ‡‡ *and hearts* §§, that we may diſcern our loſt condition, by ſin original and actual; may attend

* 1 Pet. v. 8. † Gen. vi. 3. ‡ Neh. ix. 20. § Pſ. li. 12.
‖ Gen. xli. 38. ¶ John iii. 5. ** Rom. viii. 15.
†† Luke xi. 13. ‡‡ Luke xxiv. 45. §§ Acts xvi. 14.

tend to the offers of the gospel, and *know the things that are freely given us of God* *. He also inclines our souls, not only to embrace, but *obey the truth* †. Such as comply with his motions, he *leads* ‡ uniformly on to their maturity in goodness, *to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* §. Those who deviate from the right way, he brings back ‖; by representing partly the terrors of religion, partly the mercies; *renews them in the spirit of their minds* ¶, and forms them again to the image of God. In this manner he conducts the whole flock of Christ; *helps their infirmities* in their devotions, *making intercession within them* **; enables them to *profit* by the ordinances appointed for them ††; *teacheth them* all *things* which they need to know ‡‡; in every affliction and temptation makes *his grace sufficient for them* §§. Proportionably as they use these advantages well, he *fills them with the fruits of his Spirit*, which are *in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth* ‖‖; and thus *is* present *with them*, and *dwells in them* continually more and more, so that they *grow up*, to use the apostle's expressions, *into temples of the Holy Ghost, Habitations of God through the Spirit* ¶¶.

Not that all good Christians have an equal sense or equal share of this happiness. For though they must feel, with some degree of comfort, the good dispositions which the Holy Ghost hath wrought in them, yet fears and doubts concerning their spiritual state may, at times especially, prevail: and the best persons, through mistaken opinion, or constitutional lowness of spirits, think too ill of themselves, as the worst people often think too well, and have lively perceptions of groundless confidence. It is not therefore by our inward enjoyments, but our obedience, that we are to judge of our condition. However, generally speaking, in those of confirmed goodness, the *Spirit bears witness* powerfully with their *spirit*; makes the testimony of their conscience clear and strong, *that they are the children of God* ***. And hence arises that *joy in the Holy Ghost* ††† the Comforter, which is a foretaste of heavenly

* 1 Cor. ii. 12. † 1 Pet. i. 2, 22. ‡ Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.
§ Eph. iv. 13. ‖ Ps. cxix. 176. ¶ Eph. iv. 23. ** Rom. viii. 26.
†† 1 Cor. xii. 7. ‡‡ 1 John ii. 20, 27. §§ 2 Cor. xii. 9.
‖‖ Eph. v. 9. Phil. i. 11. ¶¶ 1 Cor. vi. 19. Eph. ii. 21, 22.
*** Rom. viii. 16. ††† Rom. xiv. 17.

venly happineſs; that aſſurance of God's favour, which is called in ſcripture; being *ſealed with the Spirit of promiſe, the earneſt of our inheritance* *.

And now, having ſeen what reaſon and ſcripture teach in this matter, it will be time to inquire;

III. Whether ſad experience doth not contradict both. For it will be ſaid, Who is there that feels any other principle moving within him, than the natural workings of his own mind? And it muſt be owned, that the generality of men, at leaſt, have no ſuch perception of any ſecret impulſes upon them, as can make it certain, that the Spirit of God is the author of them, any otherwiſe than as we know, that *every good gift is from above* †. Yet ſometimes a religious or virtuous thought ſhall preſent itſelf to us, ſo very ſuddenly and ſeaſonably, that we cannot but have a more particular perſuaſion, if we reflect at all, of its proceeding immediately from a gracious inviſible power. But were this otherwiſe, we every day ſee perſons influenced by their fellow-creatures, and ſtrongly too, without perceiving it in the leaſt. And is not our Creator infinitely abler to do the ſame thing? Our Saviour argues very juſtly: *The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit* ‡. The very motion of the air is much too ſubtle to have its courſe and the manner of its operations minutely traced, yet its effects are very manifeſt, and very great. Thus likewiſe the Spirit of God, though it be inviſible, is yet powerful in its movements, producing ſuch changes in the heart as nothing elſe can.

But it may be urged, that even of theſe effects, there is by no means the evidence which might be expected. Many perſons are as bad as they well can be; and few, if any, ſo good as they eaſily might be; where then is the proof of thoſe heavenly influences, which are to reform the one ſort, and perfect the other? Now we ſhould remember, that throughout the diſpenſations of God towards rational creatures, he in no caſe doth ſo much as he can; for doing leſs is more properly ſuited to their make. As we have not by nature a ſufficient

* Eph. i. 13, 14. † James i. 17. ‡ John iii. 8.

power, he is ready to add to it. But as we have by nature ſome power of taking preliminary, though of themſelves ineffectual ſteps towards amendment, he requires we ſhould firſt exert that; and ordinarily will make our behaviour the meaſure of his own; though ſometimes, *that he may ſhew the exceeding riches of his grace* *, he extends uncommon degrees of it to very great ſinners. Our Saviour therefore, when in the text he promiſes the Holy Spirit to his diſciples, doth it only on the condition, that, with the ſtrength which they already had, they *kept his commandments:* and tells them, that the reſt of *the world cannot receive this Comforter, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him:* they turn their eyes from the light, and harden themſelves againſt feeling conviction. Yet even ſuch he treats, by his Spirit, for ſome time, in the manner which himſelf deſcribes: *Behold, I ſtand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him* †. But if men *reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt* ‡, *grieve him* §, and *do deſpite to him* ‖, no wonder if at laſt he depart, and leave them to the ſin and miſery which they have choſen. *For into a malicious ſoul wiſdom ſhall not enter, nor dwell in the body that is ſubject unto ſin. The Holy Spirit of diſcipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without underſtanding, and will not abide when unrighteouſneſs cometh in* ¶.

They then, who are reſolute in wickedneſs, can hope for no experience of our Saviour's promiſe; and, for the ſame reaſon, ſuch as are irreſolute in goodneſs, can expect but little. For the rule, ſo often repeated in the goſpel, is, notwithſtanding its firſt appearance, very reaſonable: *Unto him that hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundance; but whoſoever hath not, even that he hath ſhall be taken from him* **: to all, who receive and uſe the grace of God, it ſhall be continually increaſed; and from all who repel and reject it, gradually withdrawn. If therefore perſons, in ſome meaſure wellmeaning, too often feel, and conſequently believe, ſcarce any thing of the good fruits of the Spirit, the reaſon is plain; either they neglect themſelves in one part or another of

* Eph. ii. 7. † Rev. iii. 20. ‡ Acts vii. 51.
§ Eph. iv. 30. ‖ Heb. x. 29. ¶ Wiſd. i. 4, 5.
** Matth. xiii. 12. xxv. 29. Mark iv. 25. Luke viii. 18. xix. 26.

of their conduct, or they truſt to themſelves, and neglect God; of both which errors he will convince them. But if, by joining earneſt prayer with diligent watchfulneſs, *we draw nigh unto him, he will* ſoon *draw nigh unto us* *, and *pour out his Spirit upon us* †. Indeed the very different effects that we ſhall find, both in ourſelves and others, from acting in confidence of mere human ſtrength, and relying on the power of the Divine grace, is proof ſufficient from experience, that the cauſe which produces that difference, is a moſt real and moſt efficacious one. Let us therefore now proceed,

IV. To the inferences from, and uſes of this doctrine; which are, that we be thankful for ſo great a bleſſing, and careful to improve by it.

1. That we be thankful. Indeed the natural powers which we have, are all of them the gracious gifts of a good God. But when theſe were ſo weakened and perverted, as they are by the fall of *Adam* and our own tranſgreſſions, then to provide for ſupplying their defects and rectifying their diſorders, by daily offers of ſuch light and ſtrength as we daily want, inſtead of leaving us to ourſelves, as we deſerved, this is more abundant grace; and makes our ſituation, in ſome reſpects, better than that from whence our firſt parents fell. Conſciouſneſs of great ſtrength is very apt to lead all perſons, as probably it led them, into unforeſeen dangers; which the more we deſpiſe, the more eaſily they overcome us. At leaſt, it ſeldom fails to give us an eſteem of, and confidence in ourſelves, very unſuitable to the condition of a creature. Even in our preſent ſtate, we are ſtrangely inclined to think too highly of our good qualities; and to forget, that *whatever we have, we have received* ‡. How much more then ſhould we do it, if our native poverty were not ſo evident in itſelf, and ſo clearly taught in God's word?

But further: the doctrine of grace is as powerful a guard againſt deſpair as againſt pride. Had our natural abilities been much greater than they are, and fully ſufficient to reſiſt every ordinary temptation, yet, had theſe been our whole ground of hope, when any trial of uncommon difficulty befell us, they could not have increaſed in proportion to it, but

* James iv. 8. † Prov. i. 23. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 7

muſt have ſunk under it. Whereas now we are ſure, that as our danger is, ſo ſhall our ſtrength be: that *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will, with the temptation, make a way to eſcape* *. Moſt gladly therefore, with St. *Paul*, may we *glory in our infirmities*, ſince *his grace is ſufficient for us*, and his *ſtrength is made perfect in our weakneſs* †: and moſt cheerfully may we ſet ourſelves to *work out our own ſalvation, ſince it is he that works in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure* ‡. Let us often conſider then, what thankfulneſs it deſerves, that God's Holy Spirit is thus active for our benefit; and at the ſame time let us always remember by whom this bleſſing is procured for us: *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter*. The interceſſion of our bleſſed Lord, founded on his ſacrifice of himſelf to divine juſtice in our ſtead, this is the channel through which grace is derived from the Fountain of all Good; and a lively faith in him is the only way of opening our hearts to receive the ſalutary ſtreams of it. But then, as *faith without works is dead* §, we muſt be ſure carefully to improve this invaluable gift. It was an ancient and uſeful precept of philoſophy, that men ſhould learn to reverence themſelves and their own conſciences. If this were not ſufficient to keep wrong inclinations in awe, it was further directed, that they ſhould imagine they were acting in the preſence of ſome venerable perſon, whom they would be aſhamed to have ſee their wickedneſs and their folly. Such as had perfecter notions of things, went yet further; and taught men, that in all which they thought and did, they were under the eye of an infinitely juſt and holy Being, the Maker, Lord, and Judge of all. It may ſeem that this conſideration is the very weightieſt that poſſibly can be: and yet it will ſtrike us with an additional awe, if we reflect moreover, that in committing ſin, we act not only againſt his known will, before his face, but againſt his counſel and command at that very time given us: that he is not only a witneſs of the good thoughts and ſuggeſtions that we reject, but himſelf the author of them: that when our hearts tell us we are doing ill, it is not their voice merely, but

* 1 Cor. x. 13. † 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‡ Phil. ii. 12, 13. § James ii. 20.

but that of the Almighty ſpeaking to us inwardly, that we diſregard. Seldom do we fail in any great inſtance of our duty, but ſomething within at the inſtant reproaches us with doing wrong. Were this nothing but our own judgment, we ſhould be highly blameable for contradicting it. But what conviction muſt we feel, when we know it is indeed the Spirit of God; and reflect how often, how wilfully, how contemptuouſly, we have diſobeyed ſuch a monitor! The epiſtle to the Hebrews exhorts them: *Be not forgetful to entertain ſtrangers; for thereby ſome have entertained angels unawares**. Much ſtronger is the argument, why we ſhould admit and embrace every pious and virtuous impulſe and ſuggeſtion; for this is receiving into our ſouls a greater than angels, the Holy Ghoſt himſelf. Let us therefore humbly invite this divine gueſt to dwell with us, and ever open our hearts to his heavenly inſpirations; which, as they will never prompt us to any thing but what reaſon or ſcripture plainly dictates, and, by that one mark, are eaſily diſtinguiſhed from every falſe pretence to the Spirit; ſo they will effectually enable us, and they alone can, to perſevere in our duty againſt all temptations; they will fill us with comfort under all afflictions; daily improve us in *all virtue and godlineſs of living*; and make us at length completely *meet for the* bleſſed *inheritance of the ſaints in light*†.

* Heb. xiii. 2. † Col. i. 12.

SER.

our preſent fallen ſtate in this mortal body; as, on the contrary, our diſpoſitions to good are diſtinguiſhed by the name *Spirit*, becauſe they proceed from the Spirit of God; and perhaps in part alſo, becauſe they are approved by the ſpirit or reaſon of our own minds. Thus he oppoſes them in two verſes after: *Walk in the Spirit, and ye ſhall not fulfill the luſts of the fleſh.*

But ſuch general terms, though very uſeful on account of their comprehenſiveneſs, are liable to be miſapplied, or paſſed over with too little attention. And therefore, that no one might be ignorant of his own ſtate, ſince every thing is beſt known by what it doth and produces, he lays before them a catalogue, firſt, of *works of the fleſh*; then, in the text, of *fruits of the Spirit*: for he will not honour with the latter name *the unfruitful works of darkneſs* *. The former, he ſaith, *are manifeſt*; it being eaſy for perſons themſelves, and all about them, to ſee if they are groſsly wicked. But whether indeed we are truly good, is a matter much leſs obvious; but of too great conſequence, both to our direction and our comfort, not to be examined with the moſt accurate care.

For this purpoſe then I ſhall at preſent endeavour,

I. To explain, as far as is neceſſary, the nature of the ſeveral virtues mentioned in the text:

II. To ſhew in what ſenſe, and how far they are the *fruits of the Spirit*:

III. To lay before you the meaning and importance of that expreſſion, that *againſt ſuch there is no law.*

I. To explain the nature of the ſeveral virtues mentioned in the text: where probably the apoſtle did not intend to make out a complete liſt of Chriſtian graces, but to ſpecify thoſe only, on which it was moſt neceſſary to fix the minds of the perſons to whom he wrote. The reſt would be underſtood by parity of reaſon, or further inſtruction, if they were not already; and had they been all crowded together, the multiplicity would have diſtracted their thoughts too much.

Now, the duties of which mankind in general want to be reminded the oftenеſt, and of which the *Galatians* particularly wanted to be reminded then, were thoſe of kind and charitable

* Eph. v. 11.

ritable diſpoſitions and behaviour one towards another. They were engaged in a warm diſpute upon the queſtion, which I began with mentioning. Each ſide would be in danger, as is always the caſe, of uſing the oppoſite ill: the judaiſing, which was the major part, of treating the advocates for liberty, as profane enemies to the law of *Moſes*; theſe, of treating them in return, as tyrants, and impoſers of a yoke unneceſſary and hurtful. But Chriſtianity requires meekneſs towards all men, eſpecially to ſuch as do wrong through error of judgment, be it ever ſo greatly. And therefore St. *Paul*, after charging as many as were perſuaded of their liberty, ſo to ſtand faſt in it, as not to abuſe it, points out, in the very next words, that abuſe againſt which it was moſt needful to guard: *But by love ſerve one another.*

Suitably to this, the ſame virtue ſtands firſt in the catalogue, with which the text preſents us; where it might indeed comprehend love to God, *the firſt and great commandment* *; but, by what precedes and follows, appears rather to ſignify love to our fellow-creatures. Now this duty needs but little explanation. We all know it conſiſts in good will to every one, to be ſhewn, ſo far as we have opportunity, by every method which is conſiſtent with other obligations; and in good opinion and eſteem of every one, ſo far as they give us a juſt ground for it: which virtues would ſo effectually direct us right in the whole of our mutual behaviour, that the apoſtle hath, with very good reaſon, aſſured us, but a few verſes before, that *all the law*, meaning all which relates to ſocial conduct, *is fulfilled in one word, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf* †.

However, placing the ſame object in various lights, gives a fuller view of each part of it: This therefore he proceeds to do. And the firſt view, in which he repreſents *love*, is expreſſed by the word *joy*. Now, if the former be underſtood to comprehend love to God, the latter will very naturally ſignify (as it elſewhere doth), taking pleaſure in the perſuaſion of his preſent and future favour. But if the one be confined to our fellow-creatures, the other muſt alſo; and then it will mean, delighting in their good, ſpiritual and temporal,

* Matt. xxii. 38. † Gal. v. 14.

ſuitably to the character given in another epiſtle of *charity*, the ſame word with *love* iu the original, that it *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth* *; and to that deſcription of *the kingdom of God*, as ruling in the heart, which a third epiſtle exhibits to us, that it conſiſts in *righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt* †; that is, in the communications which he hath made of his gifts and graces, to others as well as to ourſelves; the very oppoſite temper to thoſe *envyings*, that are enumerated, juſt before the text, amongſt *the works of the fleſh*.

The word *peace* alſo, which follows next, may ſignify peace with God, and conſequently within our own breaſts; but is determined by the others on each ſide, rather to ſignify, principally if not ſolely, a peaceable temper and conduct towards all around us. *Long-ſuffering* too, ſometimes means patience under afflictions; but here, more eſpecially, under provocations and injuries. *Gentleneſs*, *goodneſs*, and *meekneſs*, are virtues, which men, how little ſoever they practiſe them, underſtand very well, and therefore need not have explained to them.

Faith, indeed, is a more ambiguous term. Moſt commonly it denotes a perſuaſion, ſpeculative or practical, of divine truths; the latter of which is the foundation, both of our obedience to God, and of our acceptance with him. But ſometimes it relates to what paſſes amongſt men in ſociety; and thus it ſignifies faithfulneſs, or ſuch a principle as we may ſecurely have faith in, and dependence upon; which it may very well ſignify here, for nothing is of greater importance in human affairs. And yet, as the apoſtle ſeems intent on recounting the good-natured, rather than the merely uſeful virtues, faith, or belief, may mean in the text, if ever it doth any where elſe, due readineſs to be perſuaded of what makes in favour of perſons; as we are told of charity, in that deſcription of it which I juſt now mentioned, that it *believeth all things*, *hopeth all things*.

The only remaining virtue is *temperance*, or ſelf-command. For the original word is by no means ſo confined, as that by which we tranſlate it, is in common uſe; but extends to the governing,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 6. † Rom. xiv. 17.

governing, and preſerving within its proper bounds, every movement of our hearts, not only towards pleaſure, but wealth, honours, reſentment; any thing, indeed, which can either entice or provoke us to act injuriouſly. Now, in this general ſenſe, it moſt fitly concludes and completes the liſt. For, whatever good inclinations we may have, we ſhall fail greatly of being ſuch as we ought in the community of mankind, if we indulge any miſchievous ones along with them. And thoſe which are called the gay vices, produce as great, perhaps greater and acuter miſery in the world, than downright malice; nay, the irregularities by which men are ſaid to hurt no one but themſelves, always hurt many beſides. Or could theſe things be otherwiſe, which they cannot, the deſign of religion is to prevent all hurt to ourſelves, as well as others; to make us happy, as well as harmleſs; happy in the next life, as well as the preſent. And we ſhall never be either, but by the practice of thoſe virtues, which, the apoſtle here tells us, are *the fruits of the Spirit*. I ſhall now proceed,

II. To ſhew you in what ſenſe, and how far they are ſuch.

As, in ſeveral places of the New Teſtament, the word *fleſh* denotes the law of *Moſes*, a great part of which *ſtood only in carnal ordinances* *; ſo *the Spirit* likewiſe often denotes the purer and ſublimer diſpenſation of the goſpel †; which is alſo ſaid, more than once, to *yield* or *bring forth fruit* ‡; and undoubtedly the ſame fruit with that in the text. But, in this chapter, the word *fleſh* hath plainly, as I have obſerved to you, a very bad ſenſe; and cannot poſſibly ſignify the law; nor *the works of the fleſh*, the works of the law; nor conſequently can *the Spirit*, which is the oppoſite term, ſignify here the doctrines or precepts of Chriſtianity. Some therefore, underſtanding rightly by *the fleſh* a ſinful diſpoſition, have underſtood by *the Spirit* merely a Chriſtian one; and by *the fruits of the Spirit*, the effects of that diſpoſition. But indeed the good qualities which you have heard explained, are the ſeveral parts, not the effects of a Chriſtian temper: and to call them the fruit which it bears, when they are indeed the ingredients of which it is compoſed, would ſurely be an improper manner of ſpeaking. Others again, by *the Spirit*

* Heb. ix. 10. † Gal. iii. 3. ‡ Mark iv. 8. Col. i. 6.

underſtand only the rational principle within us. And by that name, indeed, the ſcripture often calls it. But then the ſcripture never aſcribes Chriſtian virtues and graces to human reaſon alone, as the productive cauſe of them. So that, after all, the common interpretation is much the beſt. The Spirit meant is the Spirit of God: our bad qualities are from ourſelves, our good ones from above. Our Saviour hath told us, that *as the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can we, except we abide in him**. And as our union to him, and *entrance into the kingdom of God*, or goſpel ſtate, is firſt made by being *born of water and of the Spirit*†, elſewhere called *the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt* ‡; ſo it is, *through the* ſame *Spirit dwelling in us*, that we muſt ever after *mortify the deeds of the body* §, and *be ſtrengthened with might in the inner man* ‖. Every Chriſtian virtue therefore proceeds from the *fellowſhip* or *communion of the Holy Ghoſt* ¶; the communication and partaking of his influences. For *if any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his* **. And as we ought to pray for *the Holy Spirit*; which *our heavenly Father will give to them that aſk him* ††; we muſt alſo be duly thankful for the gift; and aſcribe the good actions that we are able to do, not to ourſelves, *but to the grace of God which is with us* ‡‡. *We are not ſufficient to think any thing, as of ourſelves; but our ſufficiency is of God* §§.

We have, indeed, originally more or leſs of right diſpoſition, either remaining in us notwithſtanding the fall, or reſtored to mankind after it, which prompts us to many imperfect inſtances of right behaviour; whence the apoſtle ſpeaks of *the Gentiles*, as *doing by nature the things contained in the law* ‖‖. But then we muſt remember, firſt, that this and all our powers are the gift of God; and ſecondly, that the beſt of our natural powers do not enable us to fulfill duly the law of Chriſt, without the inward motions of the Holy Spirit; as, on the other hand, his motions may prove ineffectual too, if we *reſiſt* ¶¶ or *quench* *** them; if we neglect to *work out*

* John xv. 4. † John iii. 5. ‡ Tit. iii. 5. § Rom. viii. 13.
‖ Eph. iii. 16. ¶ 2 Cor. xiii. 14. ** Rom. viii. 9.
†† Luke xi. 13. ‡‡ 1 Cor. xv. 10. §§ 2 Cor. iii. 5.
‖‖ Rom. ii. 14. ¶¶ Acts vii. 51. *** 1 Theſſ. v. 19.

out our own ſalvation with the ſtrength which he gives us, inſtead of being encouraged to it, as we certainly ought, by his *working in us both to will and to do* *.

Our own endeavours then being ſtill neceſſary; and, if uſed in humble dependence on God, certain of ſucceſs, there can be no objection from reaſon againſt this doctrine. Nor is it any real one from experience, that we have ſeldom, if at all, an immediate and diſtinct perception of theſe influences. For our fellow-creatures influence us often very ſtrongly, without our perceiving it; much more then may the Almighty. And that the operations of his power, in the works of grace, ſhould be ſecret, and ſilent, and commonly gradual, is by no means improbable, ſince they are ſo in the works of nature. This gives occaſion in each for the thoughtleſs to forget God, but for the conſiderate to admire him the more; who, by a ſlow and imperceptible progreſs, for the moſt part, brings to perfection *the fruits of the Spirit*, as he doth thoſe of the earth; and the former, if due cultivation be not wanting, with infallible ſucceſs; *filling the heart* of the Chriſtian always, as well as of the huſbandman uſually, *with food and gladneſs* †. How very great cauſe for gladneſs a ſenſe of being *filled with* theſe *fruits of righteouſneſs* affords men, will appear from proceeding

III. To lay before you the meaning and importance of that expreſſion in the text, that *againſt ſuch there is no law.*

Of theſe words it is a very true ſenſe, that the practiſers of the goſpel virtues have, generally ſpeaking, nothing to fear from human laws; and a very material ſenſe, conſidering what ſevere puniſhment are frequently incurred by the contrary vices: on which account St. *Peter* juſtly aſks, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good* ‡? But this, though a right meaning in itſelf, comes far ſhort of the apoſtle's meaning; which is, that whereas the law of nature requires obedience, without giving any certainty of pardon and acceptance on whatever terms, after diſobeying; and *the law* of Moſes *being added, becauſe of tranſgreſſions* §; that is, partly to convince men of their tranſgreſſions, partly to reſtrain them from tranſgreſſing, increaſed both

* Phil. ii. 12, 13. † Acts xiv. 17. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 13. § Gal. iii. 19.

both the number of duties and the fear of puniſhment, but afforded only obſcure hopes, either of aſſiſtance or forgiveneſs: the goſpel of Chriſt was revealed, in God's due time, to relieve mankind, on moſt equitable conditions, from the rigour of the other two; ſupplying the promiſe of mercy after failures; taking off the heavy yoke of ritual obſervances; producing in men the good diſpoſitions required; and expreſsly aſſuring them, that a perfect obedience would not be expected, but a faithful and ſincere one be ſufficient, in order to obtain eternal happineſs. *Againſt ſuch* therefore, as thus poſſeſs and exerciſe the ſeveral Chriſtian graces, *there is no law.* For them there is a law to direct and reward them; againſt them there is none to ſentence and puniſh them. The ſtrict demand of the covenant of works is relaxed; the burden of the Moſaic ordinances is removed; and *the law of the Spirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus hath made them free from the law of ſin and death* *. Still, indeed, they are ſubject to the law, which gave them this freedom; *they are created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that they ſhould walk in them* †. But this the apoſtle conſiders as a privilege, not a ſervitude; a privilege, however, neceſſary to be uſed; and therefore he expreſſes very diſtinctly the nature of it. *There is no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit* ‡. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be ſpiritually minded is life and peace* §.

Here then is the plain trial of our condition. If we are deſtitute of *the fruits of the Spirit*, it is bad: if we find them in our hearts and lives, we have proof enough of its being good; and need never diſquiet ourſelves for want of any other. Being able to tell the very moment when we became pious and virtuous, is not material, provided we are ſo now: and happieſt of all are they, who remember not themſelves ever to have been otherwiſe. A feeling of immediate and ſenſible aſſurances of God's favour, ſo impreſſed upon us, that we can certainly diſtinguiſh it to be of divine original, from the manner in which it affects us, may be often vouchſafed, but is no where in ſcripture made neceſſary: and all feelings are

* Rom. viii. 2. † Eph. ii. 10. ‡ Rom. viii. 1. § Ibid. 6.

are imaginary and deceitful, unleſs they be accompanied with that one, which the apoſtle experienced and mentions: *For our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, we have had our converſation in the world* *. Our Saviour's rule, of *knowing every tree by its fruit* †, is the only ſure way to judge of ourſelves, as well as others. And though perhaps we may be ſometimes at a loſs how to judge; or inclined, and even ſtrongly, to fear the worſt; yet, if this ariſe, not from preſumptuous ſins, or habitual negligence, but merely from exceſſive humility or weakneſs of ſpirits, a modeſt diffidence will never hinder our future happineſs, nor will a bold poſitiveneſs ever forward it. Good men may be caſt down, and bad men elevated, without any reaſon. The former may ſee much in themſelves to diſlike, and yet God may ſee enough of what he approves, to accept them: they may experience but little joy in ſerving him, and yet *walk* more completely *worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing* ‡, for doing it without the encouragement of a preſent reward. The latter, on the other hand, may build upon groundleſs fancies of their own, miſtaking them for divine communications; may be abſolutely confident, wonderfully tranſported, yet find themſelves at laſt fatally deceived. It is not therefore by their fears, or their hopes, or their raptures, that men are to judge of their ſpiritual condition. *Hereby*, ſaith St. *John*, *we do know that we know God, if we keep his commandments* §. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous: he that committeth ſin is of the devil* ‖.

But then we ſhall miſerably cheat ourſelves, if we take that for righteouſneſs which is not, or one part of it for the whole. If we miſtake a conſtitutional, or perhaps affected good-nature, ſhewn, it may be, to extravagance on ſome occaſions, and not at all on others, for Chriſtian love, which comprehends every act of juſtice and mercy; if, with ever ſo extenſive a benevolence to our fellow-creatures, we fail of governing ourſelves by the rules of ſobriety, temperance and chaſtity, or thinking of ourſelves with due *lowlineſs of mind* ¶; if,

* 2 Cor. i. 12. † Luke vi. 44. ‡ Col. i. 10.
§ 1 John ii. 3. ‖ 1 John iii. 7, 8. ¶ Phil. ii. 3.

if, with the practice of all theſe duties, we omit the worſhip of God our Maker, or perform it without inward reverence and affection, or live without an humble ſenſe of our conſtant dependence upon him; nay, if we pay him all the honour which unaſſiſted reaſon enjoins, but wilfully reject, or contemptuouſly ſlight, the doctrines or precepts of revelation, or any one of them; or if, profeſſing to receive and obſerve them all, we are not careful to improve ourſelves by them into a Chriſtian frame of mind, with reſpect both to this world and the next; or if, laſtly, with what diligence ſoever we may labour in every good work, we are not ſenſible that we can neither ſucceed without the aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, nor be accepted but for the merits of his Son, we muſt not imagine, that he who hath preſcribed every article of faith and duty, from knowing them all to be neceſſary in our caſe, will permit us to diſregard ſuch of them as we ſhall pleaſe, without pronouncing us unworthy of the ſalvation which he hath offered, and inflicting on us the puniſhments which he hath threatened. Let every one therefore think, and think moſt ſeriouſly, whether he is indeed ſuch as God requires, in all theſe particulars; and ſtudy to amend, not to flatter himſelf.

It is very true, *the fruits of the Spirit*, mentioned in the text, ſeem to be wholly moral virtues, and almoſt wholly thoſe of mutual kindneſs and humanity. Nor will any rightneſs of belief, or fervency of devotion, or ſtrictneſs of life avail us, if we want ſocial goodneſs and beneficence. But ſtill theſe laſt, as the ſcripture moſt evidently ſhews, are not the only fruits of the Spirit; and therefore we muſt learn to practiſe other virtues from other texts, as well as the benevolent virtues from this. It is indeed ſaid, that *againſt* the obſervers of *theſe there is no law*. But then they are ſuppoſed to act conſiſtently; to obſerve every thing elſe at the ſame time, that ſtands on the ſame foundation, elſe they obſerve not even theſe from the right principle; nor will they be able to obſerve them in a ſufficient degree. Every virtue is connected with every other; and all virtue with piety. For without the love of God to excite us, and the fear of God to reſtrain us, and the word of God to direct us, and the grace of God to ſtrengthen us, we ſhall neither behave to our fellow-crea-

tures, nor govern ourſelves, in a proper manner. *What therefore he hath joined together, let not us put aſunder* * : but *giving all diligence, add to our faith virtue,* or manly boldneſs in profeſſing it; *and to virtue, knowledge* of whatever may adorn and defend it; *and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godlineſs; and to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs* towards our fellow-Chriſtians; *and to brotherly kindneſs, charity* towards all men without exception †. *For ſo an entrance ſhall be adminiſtered unto us abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt* ‡: to which may God, for his ſake, bring us all. Amen.

* Matth. xix. 6. † 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. ‡ Ibid ii.

SERMON CXI.

GOOD MEN HAVE THE EVIDENCE IN THEIR OWN BREAST THAT GOD AIDS AND LOVES THEM.

ROM. viii. 16.

The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God.

WHOEVER believes religion to be true, and thinks with any ſerioufneſs concerning it, muſt needs be earneſtly deſirous to find out, whether the ſtate of his mind, and the courſe of his life, be ſuch as God expects and will reward, or forbids and will puniſh. Now this depends on two things; an acquaintance with ourſelves, and with the diſpoſition of our Maker. *The ſpirit of man, which is in him, knoweth the things of a man* *; and may alſo *clearly ſee, from the creation of the world, the inviſible things* of the author of it, *even his eternal power and godhead* †; thoſe attributes of his nature, by which his proceedings towards his creatures will be directed. But ſtill the holy ſcripture teaches, that the Spirit of God likewiſe bears a part, highly neceſſary, in the great work of diſcovering what title we have to the mercy and favour of heaven. It will therefore be requiſite to conſider this important ſubject, in the manner which St. *Paul* hath pointed out to us in the text: and, for this end, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew you,

I. What is implied in being *the children of God.*

II. How far *our* own *ſpirit* is capable of *bearing witneſs that we are* ſuch.

III. What

* 1. Cor. ii. 11. † Rom. i. 20.

III. What additional *witneſs* to it *the* Divine *Spirit* may *bear.*

I. What is implied in being *the children of God.*

All beings, endued with moral qualifications, and the ability of looking up to the Fountain of Perfection, are, in a large ſenſe of the word, the children of him who is *the Father of Spirits* *, being *made in his image* †. But as the capacity of reſembling him is the very foundation of their guilt, who, inſtead of improving, wear out the traces of this divine ſimilitude; ſo they alone are, to any beneficial purpoſe, *the children of their Father in heaven* ‡, who, by imitating his holineſs and goodneſs, continue objects of his paternal affection. For that all pious and virtuous perſons are thus related to him, our common reaſon perceives in general; but the more diſtinct apprehenſion of the nature, and duties, and benefits of this relation, we owe to ſcripture.

There we learn, that God created man *after his likeneſs* §, not only in reſpect of *righteouſneſs and true holineſs* ||, but alſo of happineſs and immortality: that the lamentable tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents forfeited, for themſelves and us, the privileges which depended on their innocence: and that being all become, by their fault, prone to ſin, we become, by our own, more or leſs actually guilty of it: that the bulk of mankind, forſaking God entirely, made themſelves *aliens and ſtrangers* ¶ to him, and *children of that wicked one* **, whoſe ſuggeſtions they choſe to obey, and whoſe temper to copy. But our gracious Maker, pitying even thoſe who were *enemies* to him and their own ſouls, *by wicked works* ††, and having formed from the beginning a ſcheme of myſterious wiſdom for recovering them again to their duty, and receiving them back into his family, gave them, from time to time, both ſuch admonitions and ſuch promiſes, for that intent, as he ſaw their condition required, and the ſtate of their minds would bear; manifeſting to them various degrees and proportions of goodneſs in this reſpect, as he doth in all others, both to man, and the reſt of his creatures, for unſearchable reaſons.

* Heb. xii. 9. † Gen. i. 26. ‡ Matth. v. 45. § Gen. i. 26.
|| Eph. iv. 24. ¶ Eph. ii. 12. ** Matth. xiii. 38. †† Col. i. 21.

To thoſe, whom in the courſe of his providence he left to be directed merely by the light of their own conſciences, he certainly did no injury. For as many as in any part of their conduct followed that, and *did by nature the things contained in the law* *, were ſo far *followers of God as dear children* †. And ſo many as, having departed from the right way, penitently returned to it, had always ſome ground to hope for pardon from our merciful Father, who *knoweth whereof we are made* ‡. But they who preſerved but the fainteſt beam of outward revelation alſo, which at firſt was univerſal, to guide their ſteps and brighten the proſpect before them, had much fuller proofs of his parental kindneſs. And the Jews being favoured with his miraculous protection, and a written law delivered by him, and prophetic inſtructions ſuperadded, in ſome meaſure for the benefit of the Gentile world, as well as their own, he ſaith of them, in terms of great diſtinction, *Iſrael is my ſon, even my firſt-born* §. Yet ſtill, as that nation, though wiſe and good in compariſon of others round them, was both in the knowledge and practice of religion very imperfect, and far from maturity, God thought it needful, while he treated them on that account with indulgence on ſome points, to exerciſe in many ſo ſtrict and ſevere a government over them, that he rather appeared in the character of a Maſter than a Father, trying to influence them more by the terror of preſent puniſhment than the hope of a future inheritance. And therefore St. *Paul* expreſſes their caſe, with much accuracy, thus: *Now, I ſay, that the heir, ſo long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a ſervant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father. Even ſo we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fulneſs of time was come;* when the Jews were gradually qualified to have a more manly and rational form of religion propoſed to them, with more ingenuous motives to the practice of it; when the Gentiles alſo had received ſome preparatory cultivation, in their underſtandings and their manners, from the purer parts of their philoſophy, which yet had fully appeared to be inſufficient for the reformation of mankind; and

* Rom. ii. 14. † Eph. v. 1. ‡ Pſ. ciii. 14. § Exod. iv. 22.

and when ſo free a communication was opened between diſtant parts of the world, that the truth of the goſpel might eaſily be examined, and its doctrines eaſily ſpread, then *God ſent forth his Son, to redeem them who were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of ſons* *; to purchaſe, at the price of his blood, their deliverance from the condemning ſentence, and the ritual injunctions of the Moſaic diſpenſation, that they might enjoy, under the Chriſtian covenant, the ſtrongeſt marks of God's fatherly regard; and to purchaſe, at the ſame time, the *deliverance* of the Gentiles from an infinitely worſe *bondage*, that of *corruption*, the ſlavery of ſin, and the dread of eternal death, *into the glorious liberty of the children of God* †.

Thus then did all mankind regain a title to this bleſſed denomination; the only begotten Son of God condeſcending to partake of our nature, that we, being thus become his *brethren* ‡, *might partake of the divine nature* §. By his incarnation and death, *he gave to them, who believed on his name*, to uſe St. *John's* expreſſion, *power*, or right, *to become the ſons of God* ‖: by inſtructing us in our duty, he hath furniſhed us with the outward means of becoming ſuch; by the influence of his Holy Spirit, thence called *the Spirit of Adoption* ¶, he enables and excites us inwardly to make effectual uſe of thoſe means; and comforts us with a joyful ſenſe of having done it, and of being authoriſed to claim the rank of God's children, or, in St. *Paul's* language, to cry *Abba, Father* ¶; a phraſe, in which the Jewiſh bond-ſervants might not preſume to addreſs their maſters **. The ſame happy change is repreſented ſometimes by the figure of a new birth or creation; the diſpoſitions and privileges acquired in it being ſuch, as may well denominate us new creatures, born again to a new life. And as all Chriſtians receive from God in baptiſm whatever is requiſite on his part for this change, and profeſs to act ſuitably to his goodneſs, they are ſo far juſtly ſaid to be regenerated and begotten of him. But if afterwards they act otherwiſe, *in this are manifeſt the children of God, and the children of the devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs,*

* Gal. iv. 4, 5. † Rom. viii. 21. ‡ Heb. ii. 11. § 2 Pet. i. 4.
‖ John i. 12. ¶ Rom. viii. 15. ** Seld. de Succ. in bona Def. c. 4.

righteouſneſs, is not of God *. None but religious and virtuous perſons then are effectually *begotten again to an inheritance in heaven* †: and of theſe only, the apoſtle's reaſoning was intended to hold, *If children, then heirs* ‡. For as by ceaſing to be like God in purity and holineſs, our firſt parents and we ceaſed to be like him in happineſs and immortality, ſo by returning in the firſt of theſe reſpects to his image, exhibited to us in the perſon of our dear Redeemer, we ſhall be reſtored to it in the latter alſo; *and as we have borne the image of the earthly man, we ſhall alſo bear the image of the heavenly* §. *It is* indeed *appointed unto* all *men once to die* ‖; but we ſhall not continue under this *ſentence of the Lord over all fleſh* ¶; but, riſing again to an endleſs life, become, in the completeſt ſenſe, as our Saviour argues, *the children of God, being the children of the reſurrection* **. *Behold* then, *what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God. Beloved now are we the ſons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him* ††. We do not indeed, and probably cannot conceive diſtinctly, the nature of our future ſtate; but this general deſcription, that *we ſhall be like him*, comprehends every thing that we can wiſh. And be we ever ſo ignorant of the particulars of what we ſhall enjoy, it is happineſs unſpeakable to think only from what we ſhall be freed; when *God*, as he hath promiſed, *ſhall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there ſhall be no more death, nor ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain* ‡‡. It follows in the ſame place of ſcripture: *And he, that ſat upon the throne, ſaid, Theſe words are true and faithful. He that overcometh, ſhall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my ſon* §§.

Since therefore ſuch great privileges are implied in being *the children of God*, let us now inquire,

II. How far *our* own *ſpirit* is capable of *bearing witneſs that we are* ſuch.

The prophet indeed hath ſaid very truly, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked: who can know it?*

* 1 John. iii. 10 † 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. ‡ Rom. viii. 17. § 1 Cor. xv. 49.
‖ Heb. ix. 27. ¶ Eccluſ. xli. 3. ** Luke xx 36. †† 1 John iii. 1, 2.
‡‡ Rev. xxi. 4. §§ Ver. v. 7.

it*? But though it be often extremely difficult to find out the diſpoſitions and intentions of other men, when they are bad (becauſe in ſuch caſes all arts of concealment are uſed, and we can ſometimes conceal things very ſtrangely even from ourſelves), yet with a good will we may diſcern ourſelves tolerably well. Of our own deliberate actions we cannot but be conſcious at the time: our intentions, if we examine them, will be no impenetrable ſecret to us. And that uncertain ſtate of mind, in which we have either no formed intention, or ſeveral not very conſiſtent, each of us may diſcover to be juſt what it is. Then for our paſt conduct; though many particulars may have been forgotten by us, yet its general turn and complexion we can certainly recollect if we pleaſe. And whoever doth but take ſome honeſt pains, after this, to compare what he hath been and is, with what his conſcience and the word of God informed him he ſhould be, will not fail of being competently acquainted with his own condition. Indeed no one doubts but he can know himſelf in other reſpects: whether, for inſtance, he honours his parents, and loves his friends, and deſires to perform his duty towards them; and why then ſhould he deſpair of knowing whether he honours and loves God, and ſerves him with ſincerity?

But many have no mind to do his will, and yet a great mind to believe themſelves in his favour. Now undoubtedly ſuch may *deceive their own hearts* †, eſpecially at times, with much eaſe. But they might alſo, if they were inclined to it, undeceive them again very ſoon, by putting proper queſtions home to themſelves; by carrying it in mind, that their intereſt is to ſearch out the real truth: and by endeavouring to conſider their own caſe, as if it were that of another, for whom they had no partial tenderneſs. Some again are at a loſs concerning their ſpiritual ſtate, becauſe they are uncertain about ſuch or ſuch points of their duty. But as theſe will not often be many or important, ſo if they were, by making proper application, they may receive ſatisfaction. And in the mean time, without knowing which opinion is right, they may know whether perſonally they are innocent or

* Jer. xvii. 9. † James i. 26.

or excuſable, by reflecting, whether they have taken ſuch care, as their circumſtances permit, to inform themſelves and judge as well as they could, whether they violate no plain obligations for the ſake of doubtful ones; and whether, in all matters of obſcurity, they keep to the ſafer ſide.

There is yet a third ſort of people, and much to be pitied, who labour, with the utmoſt ſolicitude, to do every thing they ſhould, and yet enjoy no manner of comfort. Sometimes they will even deny, that they are at all in earneſt about religion; though their concern, at imagining they are not, is a full proof that they are. And this ariſes generally from a diſorder in the body, affecting the mind; of which, however, it is exceedingly hard to convince them, becauſe, it may be, they are otherwiſe tolerably in health. But if happily they can be brought, though againſt their own perſuaſion, to take medicinal advice, the relief which they commonly find, ſhews, by experience, where the defect lay. Sometimes again their uneaſineſs, though ill-grounded, proceeds from a different cauſe. They read, in devotional books, confeſſions of ſin, acknowledging ſuch heinous degrees of guilt as too many have incurred, but they have not: however, they repeat the whole inconſiderately, though much of it was intended only for others; and ſo, by accuſing themſelves of what they have never done, come to fancy themſelves what they never were. And a further miſtake, too frequent, is, that the pious authors of ſuch treatiſes, expreſſing for the moſt part very warmly, in the prayers compoſed by them, thoſe devout affections, of which they probably felt an unuſual ſhare, perſons, not liable by nature to ſuch ſtrong emotions, imagine themſelves totally deſtitute of real piety. Or if they were formerly fervent in ſacred exerciſes, and now, as they go on towards the decline of their days, are leſs ſo, they grow ſuſpicious, that whatever vigour and life there was once in their profeſſion of religion, it is all gone, and their caſe become bad, perhaps deſperate. And thus, while the general fault of mankind is to have much ground for fear, and yet no fear at all, theſe poor wretches, often with no ground for any, have more than they are able to ſupport.

Now, where this proceeds, in any conſiderable meaſure, from conſtitution, their own thinking and reading upon the

ſubject will but make bad worſe; and others arguing with them about it, though ever ſo rightly, will not make things much better. The only effectual way therefore is, to prevail on them, if poſſible, to have ſome little regard for the judgment of ſerious and prudent friends, though in oppoſition to their own, till they can uſe it better; and ſuffer their thoughts to be turned for a time, whilſt other means are uſing, to things of ſmaller importance, and even of harmleſs amuſement. For the ſtrong exertion either of a mind or body, originally weak, or accidentally over-ſtrained, will only produce a ſtill worſe feebleneſs. Moderate relaxation therefore is, in theſe circumſtances, a real duty, how apt ſoever the parties concerned may be to look on it as a ſin; for which reaſon it ought to be recommended with great prudence and caution. But on the other hand, it muſt not be conceived, that all concern of men about their ſpiritual ſtate proceeds from bodily indiſpoſition; for this would be a fatal miſtake. There may be, and God knows frequently is, but too much foundation for ſuch concern; and then the ſole cure is earneſt prayer for pardon and grace, and diligent ſtudy of better obedience. Or if there be no juſt foundation, the appearance of the contrary may flow wholly or chiefly from erroneous notions, which can only be overcome by ſuitable arguments. And theſe errors indeed are various; but as they principally relate to the articles of repentance, faith, and love to God, ſo the following conſiderations will go far towards removing them: that whatever faults people heartily wiſh, from a ſenſe of duty to their Maker, Redeemer and Sanctifier, they had never committed, and take effectual care never to commit again deſignedly, they have as truly repented of them as poſſible; and whether their ſorrow were ever ſo calm or ever ſo paſſionate, makes no eſſential difference: that a true faith in Chriſt is known by its fruits; and if it purifies the ſoul and life, however weak, is undoubtedly genuine: that love to God, as well as man, conſiſts, not in extaſies and tranſports, of which bad perſons may have ſtrange fits, and good ones little or nothing, but in a ſteady exerciſe of real regard and right behaviour to the object of our affection.

By theſe means then we may all be enabled to judge, in a conſiderable meaſure, what manner of men we have been and are; for this depends on the proper uſe of our faculties concerning a point within our reach. But the further queſtion, How God will deal with ſuch, is one of a quite different ſort; to which reaſon unaſſiſted can return but a very general and indeterminate anſwer. Blameleſs creatures, indeed, are ſecure of their Creator's kindneſs; but in what degree, or for what duration, even they of themſelves cannot know. Much leſs then may ſinners, as we are, preſume to indulge high hopes of our own forming, when we have ſo much cauſe for dread and fearful expectation. It is true, repentance and amendment, if they proceed from right principles, do renew in us the image of our heavenly Father, ſo far as they go; and his goodneſs will not permit us to deſpair of his returning children being received by him. But whether our return, after the offences that we have committed, be ſuch as he can accept; or if it be, what correction he may firſt inflict upon us in a life to come; to what rank in his family he may then vouchſafe to re-admit us; or how long or how little a time he may continue to us the being which we have forfeited, our own ſpirit can never teach us with any certainty. And therefore it concerns us, beyond expreſſion, to inquire,

III. What additional *witneſs the* Divine *Spirit bears that we are the children of God.*

Now, having originally borne witneſs in the ſtrongeſt manner, to the truth of the goſpel, by his predictions of it before it appeared, and his miraculous operations attending the delivery of it to the world, he bears irrefragable witneſs by conſequence to every ſucceeding age, that all, who ſincerely believe and obey it, are, notwithſtanding their former ſins, and preſent imperfections, *waſhed white in the blood of the Lamb, and he that ſitteth on the throne ſhall dwell among them* *: they ſhall be led, by his paternal care, in ſafety, through all the temptations and difficulties of this world, and inherit, in the world to come, a bleſſed immortality in their Father's houſe. Then, beſides this general teſtimony, the Holy Spirit hath

* Rev. vii. 14, 15.

hath atteſted more eſpecially a truth of infinite importance to us, and much doubted by the firſt Chriſtians for ſome years, that the Gentile world hath an equal right to God's promiſes with the Jews; of which it was an early and full proof, that he imparted his gifts and graces to both equally, *putting no difference between them* *. And this, in all likelihood, is what St. *Paul* more peculiarly deſigned to aſſert in the text. But the Spirit not only gives theſe external evidences of our acceptance, but aſſiſts us inwardly to know our true ſtate towards God, of which we might elſe be often fatally ignorant. And for this reaſon *David* prays ſo earneſtly, *Try me, O God, and ſeek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well, if there be any way of wickedneſs in me; and lead me in the way everlaſting* †. For the ſame Spirit, after ſhewing us what we are, enables us, by his influences, to become what we ſhould be. For *we are not ſufficient of ourſelves* even *to think any thing* ‡ with effect; but by his co-operation we come to have the only ſure argument, that we in particular are the children of God. The virtues and graces of a good heart and life are that diſtinguiſhing mark of true Chriſtians, on account of which they are ſaid in ſcripture to be *ſealed with the Holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance* §. For as our happineſs hereafter ſhall conſiſt in the ſame temper in which our duty conſiſts now, he who is really, though imperfectly, poſſeſſed of that temper, *hath* already received *the firſt fruits of the Spirit* ‖; and taſted, in ſome meaſure, of what he ſhall enjoy abundantly. Whoever therefore *walks not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit* ¶, having his *converſation* ſuch *as becomes the goſpel of Chriſt* **, *the law of the Spirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus hath made him free from the law of ſin and death* ††; and of this *he hath the witneſs in himſelf* ‡‡, if he will attend to it. Elſe, indeed, a timorous diſpoſition, or a feeble body affecting the mind, may diſquiet him: but ſtill, ever ſo great fears will no more endanger the ſalvation of a good man, than ever ſo great aſſurance will prevent the puniſhment of a wicked one. If any one is inclined then to ſuſpicions and apprehenſions

* Acts xv. 9. † Pſ. cxxxix. 23, 24. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5.
§ Eph. i. 13, 14. ‖ Rom. viii. 23. ¶ Rom. viii. 1.
** Phil. i. 27. †† Rom. viii. 2. ‡‡ 1 John v. 10.

concerning his title to God's favour, without knowing why; or can charge himſelf with nothing, when he ſets about it, but ſuch defects and failures, as the ſcripture ſhews, and perſons of known piety and diſcretion can aſſure him, are conſiſtent with a ſtate of religion, let him reject ſuch imaginations entirely, if he is able. If he is not, let him bear them as afflictions, but never yield to them as truths; or fancy, on account of ſuch things, that his condition is bad, and God hath forſaken him. For there can hardly be a ſurer proof to the contrary, than that God preſerves his conſcience tender, and his life clear of wilful ſin.

As to that reviving comfort and delightful ſatisfaction, which people of this turn complain they do not experience, and are apt erroneouſly to conſider as the only favourable witneſs of the Spirit, it is indeed ſometimes a preſent reward, which God beſtows on his ſervants. But no ſafe concluſion can be drawn from the moſt agreeable of theſe perceptions, without a faithful care to ſerve him; and they, who go on to ſerve him faithfully without any of them, give a more acceptable demonſtration of the ſincerity of their zeal, than if they enjoyed them all the while in the higheſt degree. For equal obedience, with leſs encouragement, is certainly of the moſt value. When therefore he who beſt knows, judges it needful, you ſhall partake of thoſe religious pleaſures that you deſire. But in the mean while believe, as you have cauſe, that withholding them is for your benefit; and indeed be aſſured of this, that both having them, and being deſtitute of them, proceeds very much from natural conſtitution, or the different temperature of different ages of life, or from uſing or not uſing particular methods of devotion, which have ſmall connection with eſſential goodneſs. Accordingly, many a one, who ſeldom or never feels much of any conſolations within, that warm him very ſenſibly, and move his paſſions very powerfully, may have, notwithſtanding, on moſt ſolid grounds, a calm and compoſed ſatisfaction and *joy in the Holy Ghoſt* *; which *ſhall be in him*, to uſe our Saviour's words, *a well of water, ſpringing up into everlaſting* life †; and perhaps many another, who hath often been full of inexpreſſible tranſports,

* Rom. xiv. 17. † John iv. 14.

tranſports, will find himſelf at laſt fatally deceived by a vain confidence. For the dictates of a heated fancy, be they ever ſo poſitive, can do nothing to counterbalance the guilt of a ſinful life; and all perſuaſions to the contrary, are not from the Divine Comforter, but our own bad hearts, or the wicked one. *For the Holy Spirit of diſcipline will remove from thoughts that are without underſtanding; and will not abide, when unrighteouſneſs cometh in* *. He never leads us to any ſentiment or action but what reaſon and ſcripture warrant; nor can any aſſurance that we may imagine he communicates to us, of our belonging to God, continue well-founded one moment longer than we continue keeping God's commandments: which therefore that we may all do always, he of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.*

* Wiſd. i. 5.

SER.

SERMON CXII.

On the Proper Observance of the Sabbath.

Gen. ii. 3.

And God bleſſed the ſeventh day, and ſanctified it; becauſe that in it he had reſted from all his work, which God created and made.

THESE words contain the account of that original appropriation of one day in ſeven to the purpoſes of religion, from which all ſubſequent appointments of the ſame nature have been derived. And therefore I ſhall take occaſion from them to ſhew, God willing, in three diſcourſes,

I. On what authority the obſervation of a weekly day of public devotion and reſt is founded.

II. In what manner that day ought to be ſpent.

I. On what authority it is founded.

It is not only our duty to addreſs God in private prayer, but alſo to aſſemble ourſelves together, in order to offer up to him our united devotions. As we are by nature formed for ſociety, we ought to be ſocial in religion as well as in other inſtances. As we are all dependent for every thing we have or hope for on the ſame Almighty Being, the Creator and Governor of the Univerſe, we ought all to join in openly acknowledging that dependence, in begging, with one voice, the ſupply of our common wants, the forgiveneſs of our common offences, the removal of our common calamities, and in returning thanks for the various mercies which we have in common received from our heavenly benefactor. But beſides this, public worſhip is of all other things the beſt calculated both to cheriſh in ourſelves, and by the powerful force of ſympathy and example, to excite in others the warmeſt ſenti-

ments

ments of piety and virtue. Indeed without it (as both reaſon and experience prove) mankind would gradually loſe all ſenſe of religion; and without that, the lower part of them would quickly ſink into the groſſeſt depravity of mind, and profligacy of manners.

Joining in family-devotions might indeed, in ſome degree, guard againſt theſe miſchiefs, and anſwer the other good ends above-mentioned: and large families may be conſidered almoſt in the ſame light with ſmall pariſhes. But family-devotions are ſhamefully neglected; and, were they univerſally kept up, they could ſeldom be expected to convey ſo much knowledge, and would ſcarce ever produce in the mind ſo ſtrong a feeling, that whole neighbourhoods and nations are members of one body, as the offices performed in more numerous aſſemblies do.

Since therefore, on theſe accounts, there muſt be public worſhip and inſtruction, it is not only uſeful, but neceſſary, that there ſhould be alſo fixed times appointed for it by ſufficient authority: for were it left at large to be performed at any time, there is but too much reaſon to fear that it would be frequently delayed or neglected, and at laſt perhaps wholly thrown aſide. But how much and what time ſhould be devoted to this employment, if God had given no intimation of his will, every ſociety muſt have determined for themſelves; and in all likelihood would have determined very differently. For the imagined myſteries and excellencies of the number ſeven, would probably have been no more regarded than thoſe of other numbers, which have as good a claim; at leaſt they would never have influenced even the ſpeculative part, much leſs the bulk of mankind, to any ſuch purpoſe as this. And even ſuppoſing they could have known farther (which, without revelation, they could not), that God had ceaſed on the ſeventh day from his work of creation, that alone had been no evidence, that man ought to ceaſe every ſeventh day from his ordinary labour, and ſpend it in religious exerciſes. A divine direction therefore muſt be extremely ſerviceable, both to prevent all doubts how much time would be enough, and to ſecure a general agreement in the particular time. For if ſeveral ſorts of perſons obſerved perhaps all the ſeveral days of the week, this diverſity, were it to obtain only in different

nations, would be inconvenient; but in the ſame, would obſtruct buſineſs to a degree almoſt inſupportable.

Now, ſuch a direction from above ſeems to have been vouchſafed in the very beginning of the world. For when we read in the text, and the verſe preceding it, that *on the ſeventh day God ended his work, and* therefore *bleſſed the day, and ſanctified it;* that is, aſſigned to it the honourable diſtinction of preſerving the memory of his having created all things, the obvious interpretation is, that this appointment took place from the time that the reaſon for it took place, from the time at which it is introduced in the ſacred hiſtory, and not from that of the Jewiſh deliverance from *Egypt*, two thouſand five hundred years after. For it is quite improbable, that *Moſes* would both mention the inſtitution of the ſabbath ſo very long before he needed, and mention it in terms that naturally imply its being inſtituted at the creation, if it was not. Nor is the contrary opinion of ſome ancient fathers of any weight in this caſe, and much leſs that of modern Rabbins. For neither of them had better opportunities for knowing the truth than we have now. And both of them had prejudices to biaſs their judgment. The former, in diſputing againſt the Jews of that time, were tempted to defend their own practice of not obſerving the Jewiſh ſabbath, by alleging, that the patriarchs before the law did not obſerve it. Yet ſome of them appear to have been of a different opinion *. As to the Rabbins, (though Philo the Jew †, far ancienter than any of them, and ſome of their own number ‡, thought the obſervance of the ſabbath as old as the world, yet in general) they magnified themſelves in after ages, by pretending that this excellent ordinance was firſt eſtabliſhed in the Hebrew nation. And it is very true, we find no inſtance of keeping the ſabbath before the days of *Moſes*. But then, on the other hand, we find not even the name of the ſabbath for almoſt five hundred years after *Moſes*, that is, till *David's* reign, and then only once §, and but once again ‖ for above one hundred years more. Yet no one doubts

* Novatian de Cibis Judaicis, c. 3. ſaith, Decem ſermones illi in tabulis nihil novum docent, ſed quod obliteratum fuerat admonent.

† De Vit. Moſ. l. 3. p. 175.

‡ Seld. de In. & G. l. 3. c. 13.

§ 1 Chron. xxiii. 31.

‖ 2 Kings iv. 23.

doubts of its being appointed, and in the main obſerved through that time; and therefore why not in the preceding times alſo, ſince there is the ſame reaſon to be given for omitting the mention of it in both caſes, that the hiſtory is ſhort, and comprehends no particulars that made ſpeaking of it neceſſary?

But ſtill, between the creation and *Moſes*, we find not only ſeven-fold vengeance threatened in the caſe of *Cain* *, and *Noah* taking ſeven pairs of every clean beaſt into the ark †, and *Jacob* bowing before *Eſau* ſeven times ‡, and both years § and days ‖ counted by ſevens, and a very particular notice taken of the interval of ſeven days in the hiſtory of the deluge ¶. Nay, we find the very name of weeks uſed **; which could not well have any other original, than from the inſtitution of keeping the ſeventh day holy. For there is no obvious foundation in nature for dividing time into weeks, as there is into months and years, from the courſe of the ſun and moon; nor any manner of probability, that in thoſe early ages the period of ſeven days was introduced from regard to the ſeven planets, a number which doth not appear to have been known then. For the patriarch *Joſeph* reckons eleven principal ſtars ††; and ſeven are not once named throughout the Old Teſtament. Indeed, the prophet *Amos*, in our tranſlation, ſpeaks of the ſeven ſtars ‡‡; but the Hebrew word expreſſes no number, and certainly doth not mean the planets; and what it doth mean is doubtful; and beſides, *Amos* lived ſeven hundred years after *Moſes*. Now, ſuppoſing the appointment of obſerving this day to be made at the creation, it would bind all men, to whoſe knowledge it came, till it was either in form repealed, or tacitly ſuperſeded, by ſubſtituting another in its room. Accordingly we find *Job*, who is plainly not repreſented as a Jew, and is by many thought as early as *Moſes*, offering ſacrifices at the end of every ſeven days §§. And perhaps the ſeventh was that day, on which the ſons of God (who, we read, ſang together and ſhouted for joy at the foundation of the earth ‖‖), are ſaid in his hiſtory

* Gen. iv. 15. † Gen. vii. 2, 3. ‡ Gen. xxxiii. 3.
§ Gen. xxix. 18—27. Gen. xli. 27, 29. ‖ Gen. l. 10.
¶ Gen. vii. 4, 10. viii. 10, 12. ** Gen. xxxvii. 9.
†† Gen. xxxvii. 9. ‡‡ Amos v. 8. §§ Job i. 2, 4, 5. ‖‖ Job xxxviii. 7.

to preſent themſelves before the Lord *. For it ſeems plainly to have been a ſtated day, and we know of no other. Farther ſtill, we find *Balaam* appointing ſeven altars to be built, and offering on them ſeven bullocks and ſeven rams †, three times over; which looks like a memorial of the original ſeventh day. Very probably, indeed, the generality of mankind, in proceſs of time, forgot the celebration of the Sabbath, as they did the reſt of their duty; yet not ſo entirely, but that a few ſcattered and obſcure footſteps of this, as well as other articles of the primitive religion, remained long afterwards amongſt the Heathen. For though a conſiderable part of the notice which they took of the ſeventh day, and the period of ſeven days, might proceed from other cauſes, one cannot ſo well think the whole did, as it began ſo early, and extended ſo wide ‡.

Poſſibly the Jews too had, in a great meaſure, loſt the remembrance of the inſtitution, during their bondage in *Egypt* at leaſt; where indeed their attempting to obſerve it, by not working upon it, would only have expoſed them to a larger ſhare of ill treatment; on which account Providence might rather permit it to fall, for a time, into oblivion. Yet when God is ſaid, in *Nehemiah*, to have made *known to them his holy Sabbath by the hand of Moſes* §, this doth not, according to the uſe of the like phraſes elſewhere, prove, that they were totally ignorant of it before, much leſs that their forefathers were. And when *Moſes*, in *Exodus*, before the delivery of the law, tells them, *To-morrow is the reſt of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord* ‖, it appears both from the words themſelves, and the time of ſpeaking them, that they are an admonition concerning the revival of an intermitted obſervance, not an inſtitution of a new one. For why ſhould a commandment be firſt given in this manner ſeparately then, which was in a month after to be promulged with ſo much greater ſolemnity among the reſt of the ten, upon Mount *Sinai*?

* Job i. 6. ii. 1. † Numb. xxiii. 1, 14, 29.

‡ Yet the ſeventh day, regarded by many of the Heathen, and which Philo mentions as being ſo univerſally regarded by them, was the ſeventh day of the month. Vid. Carpzovii Philoniana. The obſervation of the ſeventh day of the week perhaps degenerated into this.

§ Neh. ix. 14. ‖ Exod. xvi. 24.

Sinai? But if, on the contrary, it was from the beginning, it might be very proper to remind the people of that, before they heard it joined with the reſt by the mouth of God himſelf. And indeed the other nine being as old as the creation, and obligatory on all men, it ſeems extremely probable from thence alone, that this, the fourth in number, was ſo too.

However, the nature of the appointment is more explicitly ſet forth in *Exodus* than in *Geneſis*. Not only ſanctification of the day in general, but reſt in particular is enjoined; and the injunction is extended not only to ſervants, but the very cattle. Several reaſons for it are alſo there aſſigned. The firſt is the original one, becauſe *God reſted on the ſeventh day;* that is, he ceaſed from his work, it being accompliſhed. For *the Creator of the ends of the earth*, as the prophet *Iſaiah* juſtly teaches, *fainteth not, neither is weary* *. And as worſhipping no other deity than the Maker of all Things, was the great article that diſtinguiſhed the religion of the Jews from the Pagan; and as the Sabbath was a principal inſtrument of preſerving and exerciſing this worſhip, it is therefore ſaid to be *a ſign between God and them, throughout their generations* †. A ſecond uſe of the Sabbath was, to be a memorial, in future times, of the happy exchange which they had juſt then made, of a ſtate of ſervitude and labour for one of liberty and eaſe. *Remember that thou waſt a ſervant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a ſtretched out arm; therefore he commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day* ‡. And it hath been thought by ſome learned men, that the time of keeping it was then changed in ſuch manner, as that the primitive and patriarchal Sabbath was reſtored, when afterwards that day, on which our Lord aroſe again, was appointed to be obſerved §. But without examining into this, I proceed to

* Iſa. xl. 28. † Exod. xxxi. 13. ‡ Deut. v. 15.

§ Wollius, Act. Er. 1745, p. 694. thinks, that the ſeventh day of the creation, being the firſt full day of Adam's life, it would be not only his Sabbath, but the firſt of his week; and that being afterwards turned to the worſhip of the ſun, God gave the Jews the ſeventh day of the week inſtead of it, but that Chriſt reſtored it. But Vignoles ſaith the beginning of the year was not changed at the Exodus; and that the day of it was Thurſday. Others think, that the ſixth day

the third motive aſſigned for the appointment of the Sabbath, which was mercy and humanity: *that thine ox and thine aſs may reſt, and the ſon of thy handmaid ſtranger may be refreſhed* *. And becauſe that perverſe nation would otherwiſe have been likely both to explain away general rules to almoſt nothing, and indeed to ſlight all rules, therefore to the prohibition in the commandment, particular ones of ſuch and ſuch work were added, in other parts of the law †; and the whole was enforced by the penalty of death ‡: whereas, people of better diſpoſitions might have been truſted farther, and puniſhed leſs rigorouſly.

On this footing things remained till Chriſtianity appeared; which being in itſelf a competent inſtitution and rule of human duty, no precepts given to mankind before, under leſs perfect diſpenſations, continue any farther obligatory, than they are plainly confirmed by it, or in their own nature moral and unchangeable. This not only the reaſon of the thing ſhews, but St. *Paul* hath fully and repeatedly declared it §; and eſpecially concerning the obſervation of the ſeventh day of the week (which was the Jewiſh Sabbath) by name, in the ſecond chapter of his epiſtle to the Coloſſians; where having firſt laid it down, that *Chriſt had blotted out the hand-writing of* the former *ordinances*, he infers: *Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in reſpect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days* ||; which words are comprehenſive enough to repeal the patriarchal Sabbath day

as

day of the patriarchal forgotten week, being that of the Jewiſh Exodus, was made their ſeventh and Sabbath; whence the patriarchal ſeventh would be their and our firſt.

* Exod. xxiii. 12.

† Of ploughing and harveſt-work, Exod. xxxiv. 21. of kindling fires, Exod. xxxv. 3. Indeed this laſt ſeems almoſt in effect prohibited before the law, Exod. xvi. 23. Nor might they buy or ſell, Neh. xiii. 16.

‡ Exod. xxxi. 14.

§ According to the Cambridge MS. of the Goſpels, our Saviour hath declared it in this point before him. For at the end of Luke vi. 5. it hath theſe words, both in the Greek and Latin. "The ſame day, ſeeing a certain man working on the Sabbath, he ſaid to him, Man, if thou knoweſt what thou doſt, thou art bleſſed; but if thou knoweſt not, thou art curſed, and a tranſgreſſor of the law."

|| Col. ii. 14, 16. Concerning this text, ſee Mede. Diſc. 15, p. 57.

as well as the Jewiſh (which, however, was doubtleſs chiefly intended), if indeed the former was different from that which Chriſtians now obſerve. Again, the ſame apoſtle, blaming the Galatians for *deſiring to be ſtill under bondage to the weak and poor elements* of the old diſpenſation, ſaith: *Ye obſerve days, and months, and times, and years: I am afraid leſt I have beſtowed on you labour in vain* *. This paſſage, in its full latitude (which there appears no neceſſity of reſtraining) implies, that all preceding appointments of this kind were, under Chriſtianity, null and void.

Still, we read in the hiſtory of our Saviour's ſufferings, that the women which had followed him, *returned* after *beholding his ſepulchre, and reſted the Sabbath day;* that is, the ſeventh day of the week, *according to the commandment* †. But this by no means proves, that reſting on the Saturday was to continue as much a duty after his death as before; though doubtleſs it was a duty as yet with reſpect to them, and probably the reſt of his diſciples too, becauſe the abolition of it was not as yet made known to them. Nor indeed would it have been allowable for them, if they had known it, to offend the Jews, at ſo critical a time, by a ſeeming tranſgreſſion in ſo favourite an article. It muſt be owned alſo, that our bleſſed Redeemer directs his followers, when the approaching troubles of *Judea* ſhould come on, to *pray that their flight* from them *might not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day* ‡. But he did not mean, that it would be unlawful to fly on the latter more than in the former, but inconvenient only, which it certainly would; becauſe the Jews, who had ſought to kill him for doing miracles on that day, would aſſuredly, when his diſciples travelled upon it, though for the preſervation of their lives, afford them no accommodations, but impute, and, if they could, puniſh it as a crime. It muſt be owned, laſtly, that the apoſtles frequented the ſynagogues on the Sabbath, that is, the Saturday; but only with a view of converting the Jews to Chriſtianity, not at all of conforming themſelves to Judaiſm, otherwiſe than by way of prudent condeſcenſion. From the ſame motive, and from a ſpirit of abundant piety, no ſmall part of the primitive Chriſtians alſo continued

* Gal. iv. 9, 10, 11. † Luke xxiii. 55, 56. ‡ Matth. xxiv. 20.

continued for ſome ages paying honour to the Jewiſh Sabbath; yet declared expreſsly all the while, that they looked on the obligation of it as totally expired with the reſt of the law; on which account, though they held religious aſſemblies on that day, yet they worked on it too.

But though the poſitive and ceremonial part of the Moſaic law is aboliſhed, yet the moral and natural precepts remain in full force. And the ten commandments being delivered in a manner ſo peculiar to themſelves, and having ſuch peculiar notice taken of them both in the Old Teſtament and the New, have been always deemed in the church of Chriſt a ſummary of moral duties. Accordingly, our church hath placed them as ſuch, both in the catechiſm and communion ſervice; the latter of which directs us, after the recital of the fourth, as well as the reſt, to ſay, *Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.* But ſome will aſk, If we are bound to keep it, why are we not bound to keep the day ſpecified in it, the laſt of the week? The anſwer is, that two things are to be conſidered: the general intention of the commandment, and the particular means by which it appoints that intention to be executed. So far as its general intention goes, which is to ſet apart from worldly buſineſs a competent portion of time for religious uſes, it was ever diſcoverable by reaſon, and binding to all men. So far as it appoints this portion to be one day in ſeven, it was always binding, where it could be known; and directs only to what the Chriſtian church had conſtantly obſerved, and prays with much reaſon to obſerve it rightly. Now, many learned men have conceived it to direct nothing farther; apprehending, that the obligation which the Jews were under to keep the day which they do, did not ariſe from the words of the fourth commandment (for that, they think, would be equally obeyed by keeping ſtatedly any one day of the ſeven), but proceeded, from God's determination made in the wilderneſs, which one day theirs ſhould be, by cauſing a double quantity of manna to fall on the preceding, and none on that. If this be ſo, we obſerve the whole of the commandment as literally as they. But if it preſcribes, not only ſome one day in each week, but particularly the laſt day, then the prayer, that God would *incline our hearts to keep it*, muſt be underſtood with this limitation,

mitation, ſo far as we are concerned in it; that is, ſo far as it relates to one day in ſeven, not to the laſt day of the week; which limitation the compoſers of the prayer muſt certainly have deſigned; for it is notorious, that none of them thought Saturday was to be kept holy. And indeed the ten commandments have other things in them peculiar to the Jews as well as this. Such is the deſcription, *that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage*; and the promiſe, *that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Now we are not concerned at all in the peculiarities, even of this part of the Moſaic diſpenſation; but to ſpeak in the words of one of our homilies *, *Whatever is found in the fourth commandment, appertaining to the law of nature, ought to be retained of Chriſtians.* Now, the law of nature enjoins only a due and convenient proportion of time to be kept holy. And ſuppoſing that proportion to be one day of reſt, after ſix of labour, in memory of the creation, we comply with it equally, whether we pitch on the firſt or the laſt day of the week for that reſt.

But there is one great advantage in chooſing the former, on which the Author of our ſalvation reſted from the labours of his ſtate of humiliation, after accompliſhing the great work he had undertaken; that thus we may very fitly join the thankful memorial of the new creation (for ſo is our redemption called in ſcripture †), with that of the old. Nor doth our obſervation of the day ſtand, by any means, on this propriety alone, but on ſuch other plain and ſtrong authorities, as I ſhall now proceed to ſet before you.

Every ſingle evangeliſt begins his account of our Saviour's reſurrection, with obſerving that it was *on the firſt day of the week.* Now, it had been perfectly needleſs for any one of them to have done this, and very unlikely that all of them ſhould, had the day been intended for no particular uſe. But evidently it was; and for what uſe appears immediately. For on that very ſame day we find the apoſtles aſſembled, and Jeſus in the midſt of them, inſtructing them with his own mouth ‡. The firſt day of the very next week we find them aſſembled

* Of the time and place of prayer.

† 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 10. iv. 24. ‡ John xx. 19.

assembled again, and our Lord with them *. Six weeks after, at Pentecost, is recorded in the Acts, a third instance of *all* the apostles at least, being *with one accord*, on that day, *in one place*, where *they were filled with the Holy Ghost* †. Farther yet, the same book informs us, that *on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread*, to receive the holy sacrament, *Paul preached to them* ‡. And that great apostle himself directs the Corinthians, that, *on the first day of the week*, every one should lay by, according to his ability, something for the poor §; which example of piety succeeding ages imitated, by charitable contributions in their weekly assemblies. Now, if any person can possibly imagine, that this day was so frequently specified in this manner by mere accident, let him only reflect, that throughout the whole history of the first Christians in the New Testament, no other day is ever specified as any way peculiarly regarded by them.

But farther still, St. *John*, in the *Revelation*, calls it the Lord's day. I *was in the spirit on the Lord's day* ‖. For that he means by that phrase what we do now, is clear from hence, that St. *Ignatius*, exhorting to the due observation of this day, within a few years after him, used it in that sense ¶; as did the whole body of subsequent fathers, councils, laws, and histories; and no one, so far as appears, ever used it in any other. This day then hath the same mark in St. *John* that the blessed sacrament hath in St. *Paul*, of being appropriated to the honour of our Saviour. The former is called the *Lord's day*, just as the latter is the *Lord's supper*. And accordingly the epistle of St. *Barnabas*, written perhaps before the *Revelation*, saith, *We observe with gladness the eighth day, on which Jesus rose from the dead* **; confessedly meaning by the eighth, the next after the seventh, in our common language the first. Nor is there a single instance, from the earliest times downwards for 1500 years, of any church or sect of believers whatever, that did not profess keeping it holy to him. For what St. *Paul* saith, that *one man esteemed one day above another, and another esteemed every day alike* ††, plainly relates to the keeping of the Jewish festivals, which

was

* John xx. 26. † Acts ii. 1, 4. ‡ Acts xx. 7. § 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.
‖ Rev. i. 10. ¶ Ign. ad Magnes. § 9-8. ** Ep. Barnab. § 15.
†† Rom. xiv. 5.

was greatly controverted at that time, not of this Chriſtian feſtival, about which there was no controverſy at all.

Now, ſuch univerſal conſent, without exception, amongſt perſons who differed ſo widely about multitudes of other matters, could not but proceed from ſome original injunction, either of our Lord or his apoſtles. No authority beſides theirs was early or extenſive enough to be a ground of the practice; and we cannot well think it was taken up without any authority, for this reaſon beſides others, that if it had, ſome ancient council would undoubtedly have placed it on a ſurer foundation. But no council ever pretended to eſtabliſh the obſervation of this day; which, far from lowering its obligation, heightens it very much, by ſhewing, that the rulers of the church all along knew it to have been eſtabliſhed from the beginning by a ſuperior power*; and therefore they contented themſelves to enforce the regard due to it, and determine particular doubts concerning it, from time to time. The New Teſtament indeed doth not ſay that our Saviour appointed it: But St. *Luke* ſaith in the Acts, that after his reſurrection he converſed with the apoſtles forty days, *ſpeaking* to them *of things pertaining to the kingdom of God*†; that is, the goſpel diſpenſation. And St. *Clement*, the Roman, whom St. *Paul* to the Philippians calls *his fellow-labourer, whoſe name is in the book of life* ‡, ſaith further, *We ought to do all things in order, which the Lord hath commanded: to perform our offices and ſervices according to the appointed ſeaſons. And he hath commanded them to be done, not at random and diſorderly, but at determinate ſeaſons and times* §. Now, what ſeaſons can he ſo probably mean, as the returns of that day, which bears our Lord's name, and which later fathers expreſsly affirm was kept by his command ‖? But without any ſuch evidence; as in the caſe of the patriarchs before Moſes, and of the Jews for many ages after him, though we

* Quod univerſa tenet eccleſia, nec conciliis inſtitutum, ſed ſemper retentum eſt, non niſi auctoritate apoſtolica traditum rectiſſime creditur. Aug. de Bapt. contra Donatiſtas, l. 4. c. 23.

† Acts i. 3. ‡ Phil. iv. 3. § Clem. Rom. Ep. i. § 40.

‖ Euſeb. de Laud. Conſt. p. 733. Ed. Reading. Epiphan. Hom. de Reſur. vol. 2. p. 277. ſaith, Chriſt bleſſed and ſanctified the day of his reſurrection, referring to God's bleſſing the Sabbath. Auſt. de Civ. Dei, l. 22. c. 30 Ep. 119. c. 13, Athan. de Sabbato.

read nothing in ſcripture of the *obſervance* of the *Sabbath*, yet we preſume it from the inſtitution; ſo here, in the caſe of the firſt Chriſtians, though we read nothing in ſcripture of the *inſtitution* of the *Lord's day*, we may preſume it from the obſervance; juſt as we do in the common law of our own country; in which multitudes of things are proved to be obligatory, not by producing the original appointment of them, for it is not extant, but by ſhewing ſuch an immemorial uſage, as muſt have proceeded from an appointment formerly made by the ſovereign power.

Or ſuppoſing that it was not our Saviour in perſon, but the apoſtles, who inſtituted the Lord's day (as indeed thoſe Chriſtian writers, which have ſpoken of it in the loweſt terms, have acknowledged, that it began to be obſerved, not only with their approbation, but by their authority *), this will come very nearly to the ſame thing. For the apoſtles were ſuch as could ſay, *It hath ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt and to us* †. Nor could they deſign it for a temporary inſtitution, ſince the reaſons of it are ſo evidently perpetual. But even ſuppoſe it had been only taken up with the joint conſent of the Chriſtian church, yet St. *Paul* would have thought it a ſufficient anſwer to all, who ſhould have pleaded for treating it with diſreſpect, that if *any man be contentious, we have no ſuch cuſtom, neither the churches of God* ‡. Suppoſe it had been only enjoined by the *governors* of the church, yet the direction of ſcripture is, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves; for they watch for your ſouls* §. Suppoſe our *temporal* governors had required us to reverence it, as they have moſt ſtrictly, here again the direction of ſcripture is, *Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers, not only for wrath, but for conſcience ſake; for they are God's miniſters* ‖. And as we confeſs ourſelves bound by their command to keep occaſional faſts and thankſgivings, on account of our worldly concerns, why not a ſtated thankſgiving for bleſſings infinitely ſuperior? But even were the obſervation of the day to ſtand ſolely on the footing of its own reaſonableneſs and propriety, yet this is the proportion of time which

* Heylin, p. 32.

† Acts xv. 28. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 16. § Heb. xiii. 17. ‖ Rom. xiii. 1, 5, 6.

which the wiſdom of God fixed on for his ſervants under the Old Teſtament: and ſince we owe him much more than they did, why ſhould we pay him leſs of any token of pious gratitude? If the Sabbath was *a ſign between God and them* *, ſo is the Lord's day a very expreſſive one between Chriſt and us: and why ſhould we not declare, by this mark among the reſt, whoſe we are? Nay, laſtly, were it grounded merely on its uſefulneſs to mankind, ſtill, a writer, who was never ſuſpected of prejudice in favour of religion, Mr. *Hobbes*, acknowledges, that though the common opinion of Chriſtians concerning this day were an error, yet it would be a happy one, and the contrary one ought not to be publiſhed †. And another author ſince, of the ſame ſtamp, hath confeſſed it to be the moſt uſeful of the ſeven ‡; as indeed I hope hereafter to ſhew you it is, by much better proofs than ſuch teſtimonies. If then any one of theſe reaſons for keeping it ought ſingly to be of ſuch weight, only think how forcible the influence of them all united ſhould be; how complicated the guilt of diſregarding them all is, and how dreadful an opening it muſt give to the diſregard of every tie that we can be under! Think, I ſay, of theſe things, and you will ſee abundant cauſe, both from religious and worldly conſiderations, to hold it in honour, and apply to it the Pſalmiſt's words, which ſome have apprehended were ſpoken with a prophetic view to its future inſtitution: *This is the day, which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it* §.

* Exod. xxxi. 13, 17.

† Hobbes againſt Bramhal, in Morer on the Lord's day, p. 238.

‡ Mandeville, Eſſay on Charity Schools, towards the end.

§ Pſ. cxviii. 24.

SERMON CXIII.

On the Proper Observance of the Sabbath.

Gen. ii. 3.

And God bleſſed the ſeventh day, and ſanctified it; becauſe that in it he had reſted from all his work, which God created and made.

IN my former diſcourſe I ſhewed you on what authority the appropriation of one day in ſeven to the purpoſes of religion ſtands. Let us now therefore proceed to conſider,

II. In what manner that day ought to be ſpent. And,

1. A due portion of it ought to be employed in public attendance on the worſhip of God and religious inſtruction.

This, it muſt be owned, is not explicitly mentioned, either in the text or in the fourth commandment, but only comprehended under the general phraſe of *ſanctifying* or hallowing the Sabbath, whereas the point of reſt is particulatly ſpecified. And, without queſtion, abſtaining from labour, in memory of God's completing the creation of the heavens and earth (which ſome of the Heathen held to proceed from blind fate or chance, whilſt others worſhipped the principal parts of them as deities), was of itſelf, without any thing more, *ſanctifying*, that is, devoutly diſtinguiſhing the day, by a practical declaration upon it of the fundamental article of true religion, that an infinitely wiſe, and juſt, and good Being, is the Maker and Lord of all things. And enjoining the Jews afterwards, on the ſame day, to commemorate their miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and allow refreſhment, during the whole of it, not only to their ſervants, but their cattle, muſt greatly promote amongſt them both thankful piety and tenderneſs of heart. But ſtill, we cannot well imagine,

gine, that they were left at liberty to throw away all this leiſure juſt as they pleaſed, when the very reaſon of appointing it led them ſo naturally to employ it well; and when, if they did not, many of them would of courſe employ it very ill.

Beſides, the law of *Moſes* directed, that the ſeventh day ſhould be a *holy convocation* or aſſembly, as well as the Sabbath of reſt *: and allotted to the prieſts and Levites 48 cities in different parts of the land †; from whence they might, with more convenience, go to perform religious offices in every quarter; particularly that of inſtructing the people, which *Moſes* expreſsly aſſigns to their whole tribe: *They ſhall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Iſrael thy law* ‡. Accordingly, *Philo* § and *Joſephus* ||, who both lived in the ſame age with our Saviour, ſay, their lawgiver appointed his law to be read and expounded, in public aſſemblies, for the improvement of the hearers, every ſeventh day, which is very conſiſtent with the more ſolemn reading of it, appointed by him every ſeventh year, at the general meeting of the whole people ¶. And St. *James* alſo ſaith, *Moſes of old time hath, in every city, them that preach him, being read in the ſynagogues every Sabbath day* **. Still, it muſt be confeſſed, that this practice is no where in the Old Teſtament expreſsly either preſcribed, or ſaid to be obſerved; and therefore we may doubt, whether it became conſtant and univerſal very early. However, we find there, that good perſons uſually reſorted to the prophets (doubtleſs for inſtruction) on the Sabbath day ††. We find a complaint, that the enemies of the Jews *had burnt up all the ſynagogues of God in the land* ‡‡; which, by

* Lev. xxiii. Comp. Numb. x. 2. Iſa. iv. 5.

† Numb. xxxv. 1—8. Joſh. xxi. 1.—8. ‡ Deut. xxxiii. 10.

§ De Septenario, p. 282. See alſo de Vit. Moſ. l. 3. p. 167. where he ſaith the Jews were to ſpend the Sabbath ιν ἱλαροτησι ευθυμιαις.—χαλαζοντας νυχ, ου τινι, γελωσιν, η σκιδιαις, η μιμων, η αρχησιν ισιδιξεσι,—αλλα μονω τω φιλοσοφειν· τα γαρ παντα παλαι προτετυπωται τι ἑκτον ετος, η διδασκαλια φρονησεως και σωφροσυνης και δικαιοσυνης, ευσεβειας τε και ὁσιοτητος και συμπασης αρετης. See alſo de Dec. Orac. p. 197, et de Mundi Opificio, p. 30. et Lib. Quis Rerum, &c. p. 49. Τετταρτος δε στιν ὁς απο τουδ' ἑβδομαδος, ἱνα των ασταλεως ἑαυτους μελετων γυμνοις, ως μηδεν ὑπ' ἀφρατως παντα δρωντες ὑχηται.

‖ Contr. Ap. l. 2. § 17.

¶ Deut. xxxi. 10, 13. ** Acts xv. 21. †† 2 Kings iv. 23. ‡‡ Pſ. lxxiv. 8.

by this expreſſion, muſt have been pretty numerous. We find a promiſe, that *upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her aſſemblies, there ſhall be a glory and a defence**. We find the Levites mentioned, more than once, as thoſe who *taught the good knowledge of the Lord to all Iſrael*†. When they had been *for a long ſeaſon without a teaching prieſt, and without the law*, it is repreſented as a dreadful inſtance of national miſery ‡. And when better times are foretold in another book, part of the deſcription is, that *from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all fleſh ſhould come to worſhip before God* §.

On the return from the captivity, this prediction was verified. And ſo good were the effects of the ſtated public worſhip and teaching, which thenceforward obtained more generally than before, that even had it firſt begun then, it had deſerved to continue through all future ages. For idolatry, which nothing had hitherto been able to overcome, was entirely aboliſhed by it: the nation grew more virtuous, as well as pious; and enjoyed more tranquillity than in any preceding time. Sojourners in *Judea*, and inhabitants of other countries, into which they were diſperſed, attending their ſynagogues, as we find in the New Teſtament they did, partook of a bleſſing, which the wiſeſt of their lawgivers and philoſophers had not provided for them; and multitudes of the Heathen were converted to the one true God. Indeed, about the time of our Saviour's appearance (as every thing good is apt to degenerate amongſt men), this excellent inſtitution was become an inſtrument of ſome ſuperſtition and uncharitableneſs, as well as much good. But that only increaſed the neceſſity of uſing it under due regulations; that it might cure, by its proper influence, thoſe evils which it had cauſed by accidental abuſe. And therefore he firſt reformed it; then by his apoſtles eſtabliſhed it throughout the world, and provided for its being carried on to all ages; and ever ſince, the principal ſeaſon for inſtructing mankind hath been this day.

On this day, from the very birth of Chriſtianity, as we read in the Acts, *the diſciples came together to break bread* ‖; that

* Iſ. iv. 5. † 2 Chr. xxx. 22. xxxv. 3. ‡ 2 Chr. xv. 3.
§ Iſ. lxvi. 23. ‖ Acts xx. 7.

that is, to receive the Lord's ſupper. With their breaking of bread, we read alſo, they joined *the apoſtle's doctrine and prayer* *. Nor was this an act of mere voluntary piety, but a duty ſtrictly binding. For they were commanded *not to forſake the aſſembling themſelves together* †, when the utmoſt dangers attended the practice. For the ſervice of theſe aſſemblies peculiarly the Chriſtian miniſtry was inſtituted; in theſe the Chriſtian ſacraments were celebrated; good Chriſtians were to be admitted into them, bad ones excluded from them. Indeed, the whole New Teſtament conſiders the followers of Chriſt, not as ſingle unconnected believers, but as churches or ſocieties, meeting together for the honour of God, and their mutual edification. And this they did ſo conſtantly, even in the days of the bittereſt perſecution, that *Pliny*, a Heathen magiſtrate, writing, within a few years after the death of St. *John*, to the emperor *Trajan*, for directions how to proceed in puniſhing them, deſcribes them by their cuſtom of holding congregations on a ſtated day to worſhip Chriſt, and bind themſelves by a ſacrament, or oath, to commit no wickedneſs ‡. Again, about 40 years after him, *Juſtin Martyr*, in a defence of them, when perſecuted by another Heathen emperor, gives the following account of their obſervation of Sunday. For though that name is undoubtedly ſuperſtitious in its origin, as Monday and all the reſt are, yet the early Chriſtians uſed it without ſcruple §, both becauſe they were not underſtood by it to have a ſuperſtitious meaning, and becauſe they could allege a better ground for it than the idolaters (which accordingly ſome ancient fathers did ‖), that then Chriſt, *the Sun of Righteouſneſs, roſe* ¶ from the grave, and ſhone forth with new luſtre. *On the day called Sunday*, therefore, ſaith *Juſtin*, *all of us, whether we live in the city or the country, meet in one place: where the writings of the apoſtles and prophets are read; an exhortation to live ſuitably to them is made by the preſident of the aſſembly; and we offer up our joint prayers. Then bread and wine is brought: and after repeated prayers and praiſes by the preſident, to which the*

* Acts ii. 42. † Heb. x. 25.
‡ Plin. lib. x. Ep. 97. § Tert. Apol. c. 16.
‖ Hieron. in Pſ. cxviii. 24. Ambroſ. Serm. 6c. tom. v. p. 81. Ed. Par.
¶ Mal. iv. 2.

the people anſwer, Amen, it is diſtributed throughout the congregation: and alms are collected, and left in the preſident's hands, for the uſe of the poor. After which he adds, *The reaſon why we all meet on Sunday, is, that this is the firſt day in which God created the world, and on which our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt roſe from the dead* *.

Such was the obedience of the firſt Chriſtians to the rules of the goſpel, though the laws of men puniſhed it with death; whereas we, who call ourſelves Chriſtians too, and live in a time when God and man require the ſame thing, diſobey both. And the conſequence hath been, that whereas their zeal filled them with all piety and virtue, and converted the world to true religion, our lukewarmneſs hath made us negligent and bad in the whole of our conduct, and we are relapſing into the profligacy and atheiſm of the Pagans. For how indeed is it poſſible, that men ſhould know their duty without being inſtructed, or regard it without being admoniſhed? And what other ſufficient inſtruction or admonition will the generality of thoſe have, who deſpiſe that which the word of God hath eſtabliſhed for them? The church is the univerſal ſchool, opened on this day by the divine command, for teaching all men reverence to their Maker, love to their fellow-creatures, moral government of themſelves, right, and worthy, and exemplary behaviour in every part of public and private life. We appeal to your conſciences, whether theſe things are not faithfully taught here; and, if they be, whether it is not of the laſt importance, that the teaching of them be conſtantly frequented?

Many pleas and excuſes are made on this head; but none will avail for the voluntary omiſſion of what God hath appointed. Think then with your own hearts: Hath he not appointed public prayers and preaching? And, if he hath, why are not you, to attend them? Some who do, perhaps you will ſay, are not the better for it. But how can you know that? They might be ſtill worſe without it. Or, ſuppoſing they are not better, if others are (as undoubtedly multitudes are), why may not you hope to be ſo too? They who fail of it, fail through their own faults. Do you avoid thoſe

4 faults,

* Apol. 1. § 67.

faults; and you may juſtly promiſe yourſelf much good from what, on many accounts, is ſo likely to *do* good. Perhaps you do not ſee this great likelihood. But is it not want of thinking, or of thinking fairly, that hinders you from ſeeing what to others is moſt evident? Or though you were incapable of ſeeing it, which is wiſer, you or your Lord and Maſter?

Poſſibly however you admit, that preaching may be of ſervice to the ignorant part of mankind, but apprehend it can inform you of nothing needful, which you do not already know. But are you indeed, after conſidering the point with impartiality and humility, quite ſure of this? Or if you were, can you be reminded of nothing you did not think of? excited to nothing you did not practiſe? confirmed in nothing you do practiſe? receive no benefit of any kind? Why, yes: there are preachers, from whom, now and then, ſome degree of rational entertainment may be expected: and ſuch, when occaſion offers, you are willing to hear. But is there any preacher, from whom you can fail to hear things of the greateſt moment to your preſent and eternal happineſs; which, by laying hold of you juſt at that moment, may be the means of your eſcaping miſery in both worlds? And is not this your main concern, in compariſon of which, not only entertainment, but information in other matters, is a mere trifle? Beſides, is hearing the preacher the chief inducement that ſhould bring you hither? Far from it. It is hearing the word of God in the leſſons: it is paying adoration to God in the prayers and pſalms and hymns. If you attend not to theſe, you will partake of little real benefit from the ſermon; and if you attend as you ought to theſe, you will never go back without improvement, though there be no ſermon at all; and you may improve very much by the meaneſt that is delivered. For that depends, not on human performance, but on the divine bleſſing. What doth the great Apoſtle himſelf ſay of his own preaching, and that of his companions? *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted; Apollos watered: but God gave the increaſe. So then neither is he that planteth any thing; neither he that watereth; but God that*

giveth the increaſe *. Therefore wait on God for it conſtantly, in the ordinances which he hath inſtituted; for you know not by whom he will ſend it, perhaps by the weakeſt inſtrument he hath; *that*, as the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, *the excellency of the power may be of him, and not of us* †. Our bleſſed Lord aſſures all his diſciples, that *where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midſt of them* ‡. And if he be there, it matters little who elſe is not.

Still probably ſome of you will aſk, Why ſhould the bleſſing of God peculiarly follow public prayers and ſermons, when you can make uſe of the ſame, or better, at home? But if you can, is it true that you do: and that you do it ſtatedly? If not, this is only a poor attempt to deceive others and yourſelves. But ſuppoſing you do, may not God with juſtice try your obedience, by directing in what method you ſhall apply for his favours? And may he not, with great wiſdom, direct to this method? Unleſs mankind be taught to worſhip and obey the Sovereign Lord of all, they muſt be wicked and miſerable. The generality cannot ſufficiently learn in private to do this, and moſt of the remainder will not. Without ſome farther care, the lower ſort will be abſolute barbarians; and the upper, much worſe than they now are. Therefore God requires all to aſſemble for inſtruction. Were he to make exceptions, every one, that pleaſed, would imagine or pretend himſelf to be excepted. Therefore he preſcribes it even to thoſe, who may ſeem to need it leaſt; but who in truth need his grace, as much as any. If they will condeſcend to ſet a good example in this reſpect to others, they ſhall be rewarded for it by ſpiritual benefits conferred on themſelves. If they will not, the haughtineſs of their fancied wiſdom ſhall be puniſhed by withdrawing the divine influences from them. And what is there, in this procedure, unworthy of God, who *reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble* §?

But here ſome of the upper part of the world will reply, that they acknowledge the neceſſity of ſetting a good example;

* 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7. † 2 Cor. iv. 7.
‡ Matth. xviii. 20. § James iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5.

ple; and therefore, amongſt their neighbours and dependents in the country, they do go to church on Sunday. But is it there only that example is neceſſary? Or is it not, if poſſible, more neceſſary in this wicked town than any where elſe? Doth not your family here, ſee your neglect of your duty to God, and learn from thence to neglect their duty, both to him and you. Do not your neighbours and dependents in the country hear of your behaviour when abſent from them? And will they not naturally conclude, that if you worſhip your Maker only at ſome times and places, it is from no principle of conſcience that you worſhip him at any?

But others will probably allege, that they would be much more regular and conſtant than they are, if it were not for frequent hindrances, which intervene and prevent them. But do you not often throw theſe hindrances in your own way? At leaſt, could you not eaſily, if you would, remove them out of your way? Buſineſs perhaps, that might be let alone, is done: or what might, with a little forecaſt, be well enough diſpatched at other times, is reſerved for Sunday; or what might be finiſhed before church time, is delayed till then; or what one perſon might manage, keeps ſeveral at home. And do you think this fitting, and will it be thought ſo at the laſt day, that every thing elſe ſhould be preferred before the moſt weighty of all things? That you ſhould make excuſes for not ſerving your Creator, which you would be aſhamed to make in any other caſe, and can hardly make in this with a ſerious countenance! *Be not deceived: God is not mocked* *.

Some however will urge, that care of their health at leaſt is a ſerious plea: and that, during the Winter ſeaſon, they cannot attend public worſhip, without hazard of it. Now unqueſtionably, where this is really ſo, God *will have mercy and not ſacrifice* †. But do not theſe ſame people venture to expoſe their healths on any day of the week beſides, perhaps on ſome part of this very day, to much greater hazards in places to which they have much leſs call? And why then will they attempt in vain to blind others and themſelves with this pretence?

* Gal. vi. 7. † Matth. ix. 13. xii. 7.

But a ſtill farther allegation is, that, could they come to church ever ſo ſafely, they cannot poſſibly: they have no accommodations there. Would God all, who have, would conſtantly uſe them! But were they who allege that they have not, to ſpeak their hearts, are they glad to make this excuſe, or are they ſorry? If the former, it is not a ſincere one; if the latter, I heartily wiſh, that, where they are wanting, more places of worſhip were built. Some of theſe perſons could do a great deal towards this; and probably they ſpend their money by no means ſo well. But, at preſent, there is room for the poor without any expence, for the rich at very little expence, even in this town, at one time or another of the day, either at their own church, or ſome church or chapel very near them.

But the hours of church are inconvenient. And whoſe fault is it, that they are become ſo? We have not made them earlier; but theſe complainers have made theirs abſurdly later. Why will they not, on this day at leaſt, alter them back to what they were formerly? Do they not often bear with the inconvenience of as great or greater changes on very ſlight occaſions? Why then muſt a change be thought impracticable or inſupportable, in order to attend upon God and his word? Reflect a little, how very low your eſteem of him muſt be, if you think this too much to ſubmit to on his account. Indeed they, who do attend public worſhip on the former part of the day, ſhould remember that it is equally appointed, equally uſeful on the latter alſo; and ſhould diſpoſe their family-affairs in ſuch a manner, as to be preſent (ſo many of them as can,) at each: applying to their devotions that rule, which the wiſe man lays down concerning their charity: *In the morning ſow thy ſeed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand. For thou knoweſt not, whether ſhall proſper, either this or that: or whether they both ſhall be alike good**.

And as all ranks of men are jointly concerned in the duty of frequenting divine offices: all ſhould allow their ſervants, and thoſe with whom they have concerns, leiſure for it. If they deſire leiſure for this purpoſe, refuſing it is moſt ſhocking cruelty: and not contriving for it, is criminal in the next degree.

* Eccl. xi. 6.

degree. But even though they do not deſire it, exhorting, diſpoſing, preſſing them to it, nay inſiſting upon it, ſo far as we have authority, is matter both of conſcience and prudence.

But now, from the public exerciſes of religion, I proceed,

2. To the private ones requiſite on the Lord's day.

If, before we come to the congregation, we think of nothing ſerious; or as ſoon as we leave it, lay aſide out of our minds every thing that we have ſaid, and heard, and felt there; we muſt expect to be little the better for our attendance. And a principal cauſe, why men are commonly ſo very little the better, is the latter of theſe two great faults. Our Saviour himſelf hath told us, *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and conſidereth it not*, (for ſo we ſhould tranſlate) *then cometh the wicked one; and immediately catcheth away that, which was ſown in his heart. This is he, that receiveth ſeed by the way-ſide* *. Since therefore hearing God's word is a duty of the day, that preparation for it beforehand, and reflexion upon it afterwards, which are neceſſary to give it root within us, muſt be ſo. And let us aſk our conſciences, do we practiſe both? Do we conſider on the morning of the Lord's day, for what excellent ends it was diſtinguiſhed from others; how carefully we ought to *keep our feet*, as the wiſe man expreſſes it, *when we go to the houſe of God* †; and what a ſin we ſhall be guilty of, and what a loſs we ſhall ſuffer, if we regard only outward form, and neglect inward improvement? Do we again, after church, take the firſt convenient opportunity for retiring into ourſelves: for thinking impartially, what is the proper uſe to make of all that hath been delivered to us; for determining, that we will make it, without loſs of time, and for intreating the aſſiſtance of heaven, that we may: or are we glad to get rid of ſuch unwelcome ideas, by any method, the firſt moment that we are able? And if our behaviour hath been blameable in this reſpect hitherto, ſhall it be better for the future? And will we *give*, as the apoſtle directs, *more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt we let them ſlip* ‡?

But,

* Matth. xiii. 19. Mark iv. 15. † Eccl. v. 1. ‡ Heb. ii. 1.

But, beſides the particular ſubjects that have happened to be laid before us at church, we have need to conſider frequently at home the general ſtate of our hearts and lives, and what we have to hope or fear from it, here and hereafter. Such inquiries may indeed be made on other days; and the oftener the better. But is it likely they will, if they are omitted on that day, which is peculiarly proper for them, and on which we are continually reminded of them? Some have little time elſe for any deliberate ſelf-examination: none can have a fitter time: why then ſhould any one throw it away? Is there nothing you have need to learn or amend? Perhaps there is ſo much, that you are afraid to ſet about thinking of it. If ſo, your only way is to ſet about it inſtantly. Every other remedy will increaſe the diſeaſe: this alone will remove it. But perhaps you cannot think to good purpoſe long together. Do then to good purpoſe what you can: bring yourſelf gradually to more: uſe pious books for your aſſiſtance. Perhaps they ſeem flat, and void of entertainment: but perhaps alſo it is your fault that they do. Or if that were otherwiſe, is it not ſufficient that by them you are inſtructed, exhorted, warned, reproved, when you want it? There is no pleaſure in this. But did you never perſiſt in applying to any thing, which at firſt gave you no pleaſure? And ſhould it not be the greateſt pleaſure to conquer your ſins, to advance in goodneſs? Poſſibly in ſome of theſe books, you meet with expreſſions now and then, which appear unelegant and ſingular: and they excite ludicrous ideas in your minds inſtead of ſerious ones. But poſſibly too, this may proceed entirely from your own ignorance, or wrong diſpoſition. For the authors of many of them were men of both as good underſtanding, and as good breeding as any, either in their own times or the preſent. Or ſuppoſe the defect to be theirs; yet ſurely, in other caſes, you never ſlight uſeful information or direction, becauſe it is accompanied by a few peculiarities, and why ſhould you in this?

But it may be your hindrance is of a different kind. You are afraid, that employing regularly part of your Sunday's leiſure thus, will expoſe you to ridicule, as formal ſuperſtitious wretches. And have you no fear on the other ſide then, that employing it idly will expoſe you to cenſure, as irreligi-

ous

ous and profane wretches? Beſides, there is no occaſion for all perſons to know how your time is ſpent. Or if they did, are you to make the opinion, or perhaps only the pretended opinion, of every inconſiderate creature, the rule of your life? Think how far that would carry you. And if what they are pleaſed to call ſuperſtition, or preciſeneſs, will lead you to every thing right and good, and the neglect of it will lead to the contrary, be not aſhamed of it for a few reproachful names; but ſecure to your private uſe, without aiming to be remarkable in doing it, a ſhare of the Lord's day, proportioned to what your caſe requires, and your circumſtances admit: improve your minds in religious knowledge by reading; improve your hearts in religious affections by meditation and prayer; guard your ſteps by firm but prudent reſolutions; and let neither imaginary nor ſmall impediments keep you from this. At leaſt make it an uſual practice; but if poſſible a conſtant one. For the oftener you omit it, the ſtronger temptation you will be under to lay it aſide: and the more ſtatedly you perform it, the ſurer you will be of receiving, not only much benefit, but, after a while, much comfort from it.

Till you take the proper care of your own behaviour on the Lord's day, it muſt be with an ill grace, and with ſmall ſucceſs, that you can attempt to regulate that of perſons belonging to you, though it concerns you very much on more accounts than a few. And therefore you ought to be religious, for this reaſon amongſt weightier, to make them ſo. But to be ſo yourſelf and neglect them is wonderfully inconſiſtent. And yet many, whoſe ſincerity in religion one dares not queſtion, ſuffer their ſervants, if not their children, to live without any regard to it, or any knowledge of it, as if they were totally indifferent, both about their future happineſs, and their own preſent intereſt. Very often they have not the ſhadow of an excuſe to make for this inattention. Sometimes buſineſs is pleaded. But on Sundays at leaſt, there muſt or ſhould be leiſure; and it is both unwiſe and wicked to ſpend it in trifling or indolence, to the omiſſion of ſo important a care; which conſequently is one of the private duties of the day. Here the injunction of God to the Jews, which cannot be leſs in force among Chriſtians. *The words*

which I command thee ſhall be in thine heart: and thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and thou ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up *. This doth not mean, that our converſation ſhould be of nothing beſides religion; but it muſt mean, that religion ſhould have a due ſhare in it; and doubtleſs then a peculiar ſhare on the day, which God hath hallowed. Employing a part of that in giving thoſe about you the obvious proofs of Chriſtianity, juſt notions of the holineſs of the divine law, and their need of a Redeemer and a Sanctifier, inſtruction in their various duties to God and man and themſelves, joyful expectations of the rewards of piety, awful apprehenſions of the conſequences of ſin, affectionate cautions againſt the dangers to which they are expoſed, will be a moſt improving exerciſe to yourſelves, and afford you the moſt rational proſpect of gaining an uſeful influence over them to your own comfort, and to their good in this life and the next. Your children are part of yourſelves: All who depend on you, are placed under your inſpection. You complain perhaps of both. Why then will you not uſe the opportunity of this day to remedy what you complain of? In all likelihood they will be much the worſe for the day, unleſs you endeavour to make them the better. You cannot indeed be ſure of prevailing with them. But if you do your beſt in a prudent manner, and engage others to do what you cannot ſo properly do in perſon, you will not fail of being able to ſay in general, *As for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord* †. They, who have never been vicious, may uſually with eaſe be made religious, by good advice and good books, a regular example ſet them, and a good-natured watchfulneſs over them. The very worſt may be either reſtrained or removed; perhaps may be reformed. And how excellent an uſe of the day this would be, I ſhall leave upon your thoughts in the words of ſcripture: *He which converteth a ſinner from the error of his way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and hide a multitude of ſins* ‡.

* Deut. vi. 6, 7. † Joſh. xxiv. 15. ‡ James v. 20.

SER-

SERMON CXIV.

On the Proper Observance of the Sabbath.

Gen. ii. 3.

And God bleſſed the ſeventh day, and ſanctified it; becauſe that in it he reſted from all his work, which God created and made.

HAVING propoſed from theſe words to ſhew,

I. On what authority the appropriation of one day in ſeven to the purpoſes of religion ſtands;

II. In what manner that day ought to be ſpent:

I have, in two diſcourſes, finiſhed the former of theſe heads, and made ſome entrance on the latter; under which I have conſidered our obligations,

1. To attend public worſhip and inſtruction on this day:

2. To ſpend a due portion of it in the more private exerciſes of piety. And now I proceed to another duty; which is,

3. To reſt from labour.

This is not ſo ſtrictly required of Chriſtians on the Lord's day, as it was of Jews on the ſabbath; to whom not only the fourth commandment prohibited work in general terms, but further and more particular prohibitions were given, and the whole moſt ſeverely enforced, in other parts of their law, as I have already obſerved to you. Nor would milder injunctions have ſuited the nature of the people; which required them to be treated, as St. *Paul* takes notice, like children under age, or bond-ſervants *; to whom rules are always preſcribed more minutely, and a more punctual obſervance of them is expected, and harſher puniſhments are inflicted, than

* Gal. iv. 1—11.

after they are grown up to years of greater diſcretion, and more capable of being truſted to themſelves. Indeed the moſt rigorous precautions proved inſufficient to make that wayward nation regard, long together, almoſt any part of their religion, before the captivity, and to enforce the obſervance of the Sabbath even after it *. But as profaneneſs and ſuperſtition very naturally prepare the way for each other; ſo when at length they had recovered from the former, they fell into the latter; and ſome would not ſo much as defend their lives on this day †, others would not cure a diſeaſe ‡, others would condemn the ſlighteſt common action, under the notion of its being work; as when the diſciples rubbed a few ears of corn in their hands to eat §; which the Jews at this day inſiſt was a tranſgreſſion of the law. Nay, they are gone farther than their predeceſſors in our Saviour's time; for now they will not pull one of their cattle out of a pit on the Sabbath, which then they would ||. *Jeſus*, the great reſtorer of rational piety, gave them the moſt convincing proofs, that they were never bound to abſtain from ſuch things ¶. Indeed, beſides his other arguments, which you may read in the goſpels, a ſingle rule, alleged by him on more occaſions than one, that *God will have mercy, and not ſacrifice*, afforded the moſt ſatisfactory direction to every conſiderate mind. For if he preferred the exerciſe of needful humanity and goodneſs before the moſt ſacred inſtitutions of his own worſhip (ſo that the latter might be omitted, if elſe an opportunity of the former would be loſt), undoubtedly he would alſo chooſe mercy, rather than mere reſt from labour, an appointment of plainly inferior rank. As for ſmall and inconſiderable actions, they come not properly under the denomination of work; and, unleſs forbidden by name, were always to be deemed objects beneath the attention of the law. Nor are we Chriſtians bound to the ſame rigour of external obſervances which the Jews were. For the world being arrived at a proper maturity for it, our bleſſed Redeemer hath delivered all the children

* Neh. xiii. 15—22. † 1 Macc. ii. 31—41. ‡ Matth. xii. 9—14. Mark iii. 1—6. Luke vi. 6—11. xiii. 10—17. xiv. 1—6.

§ Matth. xii. 1—8. Mark ii. 23—28 Luke vi. 1—5.

|| Matth. xii. 11. Luke xiv. 5. Nizz. vet. in Wagenſeil, p. 207, 208.

¶ See the Texts, d, e.

dren of God from that ſubjection to theſe elements, which their former ſtate of infancy required, and placed them under the milder diſcipline of a more ingenuous and manly obedience. Not the letter therefore, but the ſpirit and equity of the precept obliges us; only we muſt remember, that to abuſe this gracious indulgence, would be ingratitude ſuperadded to profaneneſs; and that our concern is, neither ſtupidly to *entangle* ourſelves again *with the yoke of bondage*, when *Chriſt hath made us free* *, nor wickedly *uſe our liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh* †, or *a cloak of maliciouſneſs* ‡.

To preſerve this medium hath been the endeavour of his church, by prudently accommodating its practice to the varying circumſtances of ſucceſſive ages. Whilſt the powers of this world were Heathen, and many believers were ſervants for life to unbelieving maſters, we do not find that they refuſed to work, when commanded, on the Lord's day; well weighing, we may be ſure, how much that would hurt the cauſe of Chriſtianity; and that abſtaining from labour on the day, was neither ſo important in itſelf, as meeting for worſhip, nor founded on ſuch evident authority of Chriſt and his apoſtles, who probably were leſs explicit in the matter; becauſe an injunction of that kind would both have expoſed the primitive converts to much ill treatment, and the goſpel itſelf to much calumny and ſuſpicion. But as ſoon as ever the civil power was in the hands of Chriſtians, they ſhewed their regard to the day, in this reſpect as well as others §: and though they did not call it the Sabbath, or day of reſt, for many hundreds of years ‖, yet they made it ſuch immediately; only with ſome exceptions in particular points, which the nature of things, or the exigency of the times, appeared to demand. Concerning theſe, the following ages differed from each other, both in practice and judgment; commonly inclining to negligence, yet ſometimes alſo to ſuperſtition. But they fell univerſally into one very great imprudence, of appointing a large number of holidays beſides the Lord's day; which degraded that, and obſtructed needful induſtry. But amongſt us, this evil was redreſſed at the reformation,

* Gal. v. 1. † Gal. v. 13. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 16.

§ Cod. l. 3. tit. 12. leg. 3.

‖ Heylin, part 2. p. 60, &c. ſaith, not till 1000.

and matters were once again eſtabliſhed on a right footing; till a ſpirit of exceſſive ſtrictneſs aroſe, and led ſome to aſſert the neceſſity of as ſcrupulous, and as gloomy a reſt, on our weekly feſtival, as ever the Jews had obſerved on theirs. Juſt apprehenſions of danger from hence unaccountably hurried ſeveral both learned and devout men into the oppoſite extreme, without ſeeing it, and without ſuſpecting (however ſtrange it may appear to us now), that any harm was to be feared on that ſide *. Grievous animoſities accompanied the diſpute, which contributed not a little to the general confuſion that happened ſoon after. Since the reſtoration, opinions have become gradually more reaſonable; but practice hath grown ſo very looſe, notwithſtanding repeated laws for the regulation of it, that few need be told what is permitted on this day; but multitudes want much to be reminded of what is required and forbidden.

Now, ſo much reſt is evidently required, as will ſuffice for the exerciſes of religion, public and private, and the purpoſes of mercy to ourſelves, our ſervants and our cattle, for which the day was appointed. And whoever conſiders how many and important theſe are, and that there muſt be one rule fixed for all perſons to go by, cannot fail to ſee, that no other will anſwer the end, than that of excluding worldly cares and employments, as much as poſſible, from morning to night. When we have removed ourſelves, as far as we can, from common buſineſs, it is mighty apt to intrude upon our thoughts, and drive out better things. But how much more would it do ſo, were we always to come immediately from it hither, and return immediately to it again?

Still, ſuch works as are neceſſary for the ſupport of life, or reſtoring ſick perſons to health, or preſerving others from attacks of great diſorders to which they are liable, may and muſt be done upon the Lord's day; only the doers of them ſhould be peculiarly careful to ſpend ſome of the remainder of it in acts of piety, which they too often ſadly neglect.

If labour of any other ſort could be ordinarily permitted on this day, it muſt be that of cultivating the earth, and gathering

* Heylin ſaith, in the dedication of his firſt part to the King, that "in ſuch a church as this, there was no fear that ever the Lord's day would have been overrun by the profane neglect of any pious duty on that day required."

thering in the fruits of it: the proper ſeaſon for which, eſpecially for the latter, may otherwiſe be loſt. And accordingly allowances of that kind have been formerly granted by law *. But they have been found ſo little needful, and ſo liable to abuſe, that theſe laws have been repealed, and that of *Moſes* reſumed; *ſix days ſhalt thou work: but on the ſeventh, in earing*, that is, in ploughing *time, and in harveſt, thou ſhalt reſt* †. Never, I believe, hath any general ſcarcity, ſeldom, if ever, any great diſtreſs, in any particular place, happened, merely by obſerving this rule. But were the breach of it indulged, whenever the perſons concerned ſhould think it neceſſary, many of them would plead the neceſſity every year, and in a little while throughout the year: ſo their ſervants and cattle would be kept to inceſſant toil; and juſt that part of the world which moſt needs inſtructing and civilizing, that is, the loweſt, would have by far the leaſt opportunity for it.

And if working is not to be allowed on the plea of neceſſity in their caſe, much leſs can it in others, where the urgency is not ſo great. There is no occupation, in which the labour of ſix days will not maintain a diligent and frugal man for the ſeventh, unleſs he wants health and ſtrength, or is burdened with a helpleſs family; and theſe things entitle him to public relief. So that every one may have leiſure, on this day, for ſerving his Maker, for improving himſelf in his duty, for teaching theſe who belong to him theirs, for enjoying alſo a comfortable ſhare of eaſe and refreſhment. And if any one, from ſordid attachment to his own intereſt and profit, is unwilling to take leiſure for theſe purpoſes, he little underſtands what his real intereſt conſiſts in; and ſhould not be ſuffered, either to keep ſuch as are under him from ſpending this portion of their lives better, or to make advantages to himſelf by labour, when others, for ſuch good reaſons, abſtain from it.

The laws of our country, therefore, are both juſt and wiſe, in prohibiting, not only work, but (with proper exceptions) buying and ſelling on the Lord's day. For they fill up the time

* Conſtantine firſt made a law for this purpoſe. Cod. lib. 3. tit. 12. leg. 3.
† Exod. xxxiv. 21.

time and thoughts, and detain men from the exercises of religion, as effectually as more fatiguing employments: nor will it be at all difficult, with a little contrivance, to avoid them. And it is both irreligious to do these things needlessly, and cruel also to force others, either to violate their consciences, by exercising their callings when they ought not, or to lose their business, by refusing to transgress their duty. But if private persons will not attend to such considerations, public magistrates, as guardians of the laws, should carefully support the innocent, by punishing the guilty.

Besides these ways of breaking the holy rest of this day, another is, needless travelling upon it. If people take journies then about their common business, it is as directly following their trade, as keeping open shop. If the journey be the only business, it is trespassing on the quiet, probably too on the worship of the day, in the face of all the world. And this is often done so absolutely, without any colour of sufficient reason, that it must be mere affectation; surely not a proper behaviour towards our Maker, nor a reputable one amongst our fellow-creatures. Possibly some of the great originally took it up as a distinction: but whoever will, may very easily distinguish himself in the same manner. Indeed too many, both of middle and even low condition, have already learnt to do so: go out early on parties of diversion and amusement, from which they return late; throw away the most sacred portion of their time, and not a little of their money, on follies, if not vices, of which they thus acquire a destructive relish; leave their families, if they have any, exposed to all manner of temptations; and set both them and their acquaintance an example of disregard to duty, and of madness for pleasure, too likely to ruin them in this life and the next.

But without worldly business, and without stirring far from their own houses, men frequently contrive to give themselves but little rest, and their servants yet less: partly by unnecessary entertainments and company at home, partly by a multitude of unnecessary visits abroad; which between them so employ several of the family, if not the whole, that scarce any day of the week is so void of leisure. Now, suppose these occupations were ever so far from being laborious, yet

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it is by no means fitting, that hours allotted to piety and recollection ſhould be conſumed and ſwallowed up in a hurry of trifles. We ought to allow ſeaſons of quiet to our minds, as well as our bodies, that they may cool into ſerious thoughtfulneſs; and when ſhall that be, if not on this day? We ought likewiſe to afford every one under us due opportunities for learning, conſidering, reſolving, praying; and *give them*, in this reſpect, no leſs than others, *what is juſt and equal; knowing that we alſo have a Maſter in heaven* *. If they deſire it, a refuſal is groſs inhumanity. If they deſire it not, they need it but the more. And, inſtead of pleading, that, if they had vacant time, they would uſe it ill, the right way is, to provide it for them, and endeavour that they may uſe it well. Thus at leaſt we ſhall have done our duty; which, we ſhall uſually find in every ſenſe, but conſtantly in the beſt, is conſulting our intereſt.

After all that hath been ſaid, there may ſometimes remain doubts concerning the extent of the repoſe, enjoined by this precept. And then our beſt rule will be, on the one hand, not to take liberties beyond the permiſſion of the laws, and the practice of the more pious and conſiderate part of our neighbours; and, on the other, not to ſcruple what propriety and decency, and reaſonable convenience require.

But farther, as hardly any one is capable of ſpending the whole, and very few near the whole, of our day of reſt in religious exerciſes, to good purpoſe, it will be requiſite to inquire, in the laſt place, how we are to employ the intervals and the remainder of it, which we need not or cannot employ thus.

Now there is nothing more fitly joined with acts of piety, than acts of charity; one excellent ſpecies of which, inſtructing and exhorting thoſe who belong to us, hath been already mentioned; and extending the ſame good office, in a prudent manner, farther, as occaſion ſerves, is an employment admirably ſuited to the day. Reconciling ourſelves upon it to perſons, between whom and us any diſpleaſure hath been, is peculiarly recommended by the reaſon of the thing, as well as by a canon of our church †. Viſiting the poor and ſick, not

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* Col. iv. 1. † Can. 13.

barely in the common meaning of the word, *viſit*, but in the ſcriptural ſenſe, of taking a kind notice of their wants, is not only directed by the ſame canon, but countenanced by St. *Paul*; who gave an order both to the Galatians and the Corinthians, in a particular exigency, (which is equally a good rule in others,) that each of them, on *the firſt day of the week*, ſhould appropriate ſomething towards the neceſſities of the ſaints, *as God had proſpered him* *. And it is one delightful view of the day, to look on it as conſecrated, amongſt other excellent purpoſes, to that of forming and executing deſigns of tenderneſs and compaſſion to our diſtreſſed brethren.

But even where there is no room for doing what is commonly called charity, mere friendly intercourſe and converſation, with our relations, neighbours and acquaintance, (*if it* take not up too much time,) is a demonſtration of good will, which contributes greatly to our mutual happineſs. And God's providing the frequent return of a day, when all the world ſhould be releaſed from confinement and toil, and at liberty to ſhew themſelves in the moſt advantageous and pleaſing light to each other, (a liberty which few in proportion would ever enjoy, were it not for this their Sabbath,) is an action worthy of our gracious Maker, and of unſpeakable moment for promoting courteſy, affability, and kind affections. But it is more eſpecially uſeful for ſoftening and poliſhing the rugged tempers and manners of the lower ſort of men; who ought, on many accounts, highly to value their feſtival days, which one of the principal Heathen philoſophers, *Plato* ſaith, the Gods appointed in pity to mankind †. It was not therefore intended, that we ſhould paſs our Lord's day in ſullen retirement, ſhunning human converſe, or infecting each other with melancholy. The Jews were bid to *rejoice* in their feaſts *before the Lord their God* ‡. Chriſtians are bid to *rejoice in the Lord always* §. And a very ancient father, *Tertullian*, informs us, that *on the Sunday*, for ſo he calls it, *they indulged* peculiarly to *joy* ‖, as well they might, ſince he who died *for our ſins, then roſe for our juſtification* ¶. Indeed, would we but practiſe Chriſtianity as we ought, we ſhould

* 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. † Plat. de Leg. l. 2.
‡ Lev. xxiii. 40. Deut. xii. 12, 18. xvi. 11. xxvii. 7.
§ Phil. iv. 4. ‖ Apol. c. 16. ¶ Rom. iv. 25.

ſhould find its promiſes of pardon and ſtrength, its beneficial precepts, and glorious proſpects, the aſſurance of God's love to us, and the exertion of our own love to him and our fellow-creatures, matter of the higheſt joy, both within ourſelves, and amongſt each other. And we are much to blame, that we baniſh religious topics from our diſcourſe; which might be, if properly introduced, the moſt delightful part of it. Not that lower ſubjects of agreeable and cheerful converſation need be at all excluded from a ſhare in the day; for harmleſs good humour is an amiable and uſeful virtue. Only we muſt take ſingular care now of what we ſhould remember always, that nothing cenſorious or uncharitable, nothing profane or indecent, nothing too light and ludicrous, come out of our mouths; nothing unworthy of rational and religious perſons. By ſuch behaviour and communication, we ſhall obſerve the full import of the prophet *Iſaiah*'s direction to the Jews, that they ſhould *honour the Sabbath, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleaſure, nor ſpeaking their own words* *. This doth not mean, that whatſoever was pleaſing was for that reaſon to be avoided by them; but that exerciſes of piety ought then to be their chief pleaſure; and nothing unſuitable to them, however pleaſing, done or uttered. They were not to ſay, *Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us* †? but at this time eſpecially to prefer innocence before inclination.

And as cheerful diſcourſe is not forbidden on the day, ſo neither is a cheerful uſe of God's creatures, who *hath given us richly all things to enjoy* ‡. The religious governor *Nehemiah*, after the people had been aſſembled to hear the law, diſmiſſed them with theſe words: *Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the ſweet, and ſend portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord* §. And it is ſaid of the firſt Chriſtians, immediately after the mention of their worſhip, as if it followed immediately after, that *they did eat their meat with gladneſs, and ſingleneſs of heart, praiſing God* ‖. But then both over plentiful indulgence, and luxurious delicacy, making the gratification of our appetite a ſerious ſtudy, or in the expreſſive language of ſcripture, *a God*

* Iſa. lviii. 13. † Pſ. xii. 4. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 17.
§ Neh. viii. 10. ‖ Acts ii. 46, 47.

of our belly *, is very inconſiſtent, not only with the buſineſs of the day, but with our whole profeſſion. And yet more ſo are intemperance and debauchery, which profane our Sabbath beyond compariſon worſe than labouring upon it would do; pervert it from the ſervice of God to that of the devil; and make it a public miſchief inſtead of a bleſſing. To prevent this therefore, every one ought carefully to watch over himſelf, parents over their children, heads of houſes over their families, and magiſtrates over the whole community. For very few things would either do inferiors more good, or entitle ſuperiors to a larger ſhare of divine favour, than if the latter would enable themſelves to ſay, with the excellent governor above-mentioned: *I commanded to ſanctify the Sabbath-day: Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and ſpare me, according to the greatneſs of thy mercy* †.

But here a queſtion may be put: Suppoſing vice be avoided, may not amuſements and diverſions be allowed? Now, in the firſt place, who are they that aſk this? Perſons that neglect religious duties. They have no right to aſk it. Let them do what is commanded on the day, before they examine what is permitted; elſe their inquiry comes only to this, Whether they may diſregard it from beginning to end? For ſuch to plead for relaxations after the buſineſs of the day is over, when, God knows, their whole buſineſs upon it hath been idleneſs or worſe, is beyond meaſure abſurd. And, therefore, when ſome recreations on Sunday, in the afternoon, were unadviſedly permitted by authority, for a while, above an hundred years ago, they who had not firſt attended both morning and evening ſervice, were expreſsly forbidden to partake of them. And of thoſe who do attend the ſervice of God, very few deſire them. Such of the labouring and lower ſort of the trading people, as profeſs any ſerioufneſs, are well content with indulging themſelves afterwards at home in amicable converſation, or abroad in a friendly viſit, or the refreſhment of going for a while to contemplate the beauties of the creation, which this day was appointed, amongſt other things, to commemorate. And they are very ſenſible, that taking liberties at all, conſiderably greater, would be unfit and unſafe.

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* Phil. iii. 19. † Neh. xiii. 22.

The minds of men, even while they were at church, would be running on the diverſions that were to follow: They would be tempted by them to neglect, perhaps entirely, religious exerciſes in private: their amuſements would grow to be light and indecent, or tumultuous and miſchievous, or both: expences and exceſſes, drunkenneſs and debaucheries, quarrels and diſorders, would attend them: the day would come by degrees to be regarded as a day of ſport only; and if once pious thoughts were baniſhed at the time peculiarly appointed for them, when would they find a place in our hearts?

Now if theſe conſiderations ought to weigh, and do weigh, with thoſe who are almoſt conſtantly kept to buſineſs, and for whom alone, on that account, the recreations formerly allowed, were intended and calculated; much more may they, who have leiſure for them nearly as often as they will, and perhaps employ a great deal too much of the remainder of the week in them, afford without murmuring to diſtinguiſh one day in ſeven, by abſtaining from them. Still the few of thoſe, who do not abſtain from them, and yet behave like ſerious perſons in other inſtances, ought to be reſpected as ſuch; and judged of, in this particular, with moderation and charity. But ſurely, at the ſame time, they ſhould be aſked, Where is the need, where is the good, of theſe indulgences of yours on the Lord's day? If you are very fond of them, you ought, as reaſonable creatures, and moral agents, to mortify a fondneſs, for which you can have no juſt ground. And if you are indifferent about them, for what cauſe do you affect to make this innovation: contrary, we apprehend, to religion; contrary, you muſt own, to the laws and uſages of your country? Is it to ſhew, that you think farther than the vulgar? Shew it in ſomewhat better. Indeed, think a little farther ſtill, and you will ſee, that compliance with wiſe cuſtoms, is a wiſe thing. And why is not that cuſtom ſuch, which hath obtained univerſally amongſt us, till of late, in this matter? Is the obſervation of this day grown ſo exceſſively ſtrict within theſe few years, that there is a neceſſity of taking new methods to relax it? Are all your ſervants grown ſo immoderately ſcrupulous, that you muſt try to weaken the force of principle in them, by giving them to underſtand, that you have but little of it yourſelves? For while they conceive

you to violate the Sabbath, they will conceive you to diſregard God. Is this then the light, in which you would have them; in which you would have other ſerious perſons conſider you? Whether they will inveigh againſt you, or only grieve for you, why ſhould you give them cauſe to do either? Why ſhould you countenance and encourage the profane, tempt the conſcientious, by your example, to do what they inwardly condemn, or help to make them look ridiculous, if they ſtand out? But, indeed, could you bring all people into your own opinion, would it be deſirable? Are not amuſements, and particularly that of play, grown much too general, and frequent, and expenſive, already? And why would you increaſe it thus? Why would you have the lower part of the world, whom happily their buſineſs preſerves from ſuch things on other days, come to think them lawful on this, when they have full leiſure for them, and may argue very plauſibly in favour of their own inclinations from the practice of their ſuperiors? Muſt not the introduction of theſe liberties probably keep them often from church, almoſt always from being the better for going thither; give them quite a wrong turn, waſte their ſmall profits and earnings, and drive them to many unjuſt methods of repairing their loſſes and ſupplying their extravagancies; by which, I need not tell you, their betters muſt be ſufferers? On theſe accounts, an author, not ſuſpected of any religion, whom I quoted in my firſt diſcourſe on this ſubject, had however policy enough to ſee, and lay it down for a rule, that diverſions ought to be ſtrictly prohibited on the Lord's day. Indeed, beſides theſe particular bad effects, the uſe of them on that day muſt contribute in general to perpetuate, without intermiſſion, an eagerneſs for pleaſure and entertainment, irreconcileable with a ſpirit of piety, and to exclude ſerious thought even at the moſt ſerious times.

It hath been ſaid, that ſuch employment is better than talking and hearing ſcandal. But I am afraid the former by no means prevents the latter. Or ſay it did, where is the neceſſity of either? If our amuſements alone reſtrain us from evil-ſpeaking, we ſhould put ourſelves without delay under the influence of better motives. It hath been pleaded alſo, that diverſions are uſed in other countries on Sunday evenings, without harm. But in ſome they are uſed at that time, be-

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cauſe they conſider the Sunday as over at that time: for they begin to obſerve it ſtrictly the evening before, and we do not. But ſtill many of them think even this an inſufficient defence of the practice; though travellers may happen, and no wonder, to be chiefly acquainted with the freer ſort. That it doth no harm, is eaſily ſaid, but hard to be proved. And were it to do but little, where men have been long accuſtomed to it, and are withheld, by a more general ſerioufneſs, and a ſeverer exerciſe of authority, from abuſing it; yet it may do infinite miſchief, where it comes recommended by the charms of novelty; and is ſo unlikely, ſo impoſſible, to be confined within moderate bounds, as in this moſt licentious nation. We have much more need therefore to learn from foreign countries their practice of going to church both the morning and afternoon of the day, than of recreations in the cloſe of it: for it is extremely perverſe to reject their authority in the former caſe, while we rely on it in the latter. And ſurely, upon the whole, every good, every prudent perſon, inſtead of being zealous to propagate things of this nature, muſt ſee cauſe to diſcourage them, at leaſt by abſtaining from them; and to labour in every way, both for their own ſakes and that of the public, to preſerve, (what there is much want of increaſing,) the ſmall remainder of Chriſtianity that is left amongſt us. Conſidered in our private capacities, our buſineſs here is, not to pleaſe ourſelves without regard to conſequences, but ſo to ſpend the few Sabbaths and few days, which we have to come on earth, that we may be qualified, at the end of them, to enter into that eternal Sabbath, that *reſt, which remaineth for the people of God** in heaven. And conſidered as a nation, we have great cauſe to remember, for our direction, the promiſe and the warning, which God gave the Jews for theirs: *If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing my pleaſure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight; the holy of the Lord, honourable—I will cauſe thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father*†: *But if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath day—I will kindle a fire in the gates of Jeruſalem, and it ſhall devour the palaces thereof, and ſhall not be quenched*‡.

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* Heb. iv. 9. † Iſa. lviii. 13, 14. ‡ Jer. xvii. 27.

SERMON CXV.

On the Great, but Little Understood, Duty of Moderation in Sentiment and Manners.

Phil. iv. 5.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

THE word *moderation* ſignifies, in the original, that reaſonableneſs of mind, which curbs the exorbitancies of all our paſſions, appetites and imaginations; confining us to proper degrees of being affected by the things about us, and of exerting ourſelves in relation to them: from which larger meaning, it is naturally and eaſily contracted to expreſs more eſpecially the due reſtraints of deſire and anger, fear and ſorrow. In diſcourſing upon it, therefore, I ſhall ſo treat of the temper in general, as to have a more immediate regard to theſe inſtances of it in particular, whilſt I endeavour to recommend the virtue of moderation:

I. From its conduciveneſs to the practice of our duty.

II. From its good influence on the happineſs of our lives here on earth.

III. From its importance to that ſucceeding ſtate, the near approach of which the text places in our view.

I. I would ſhew how conducive the keeping all our inward movements within juſt limits, is to the practice of our duty. But here it muſt be obſerved, that a merely natural vehemence of ſpirit, is not ſtrictly an actual ſin, though it be one of the conſequences of our original depravity, which we have uſually much cauſe to lament. For it always puts us on a harder

harder trial than perſons of a cooler temperament have to undergo. Yet ſtill, the greater is our virtue if we ſtand this trial; and the leſs our guilt, if we ſometimes fail, from infirmity or ſurpriſe. But if we act wrong, through groſs negligence or deliberate indulgence, that we were ſtrongly inclined to it, is no good excuſe; for as we could not but know our inclination, we ought to have watched againſt it, and checked it. Therefore it is not the warmth of temper with which we are born, and againſt which we ſtrive, but the wilful or heedleſs indulgence of it, that unfits us for the duties of life.

We are all of us very ſenſible, in the main, what thoſe duties are. We ſeldom err much in any particular, when we really deſire to know what is incumbent on us: the fitneſs of pious and virtuous behaviour is evident to our underſtandings, and the eſteem of it natural to our hearts. A ſtranger to human affairs would, from this account, immediately conclude, that ſurely ſcarce any one ever miſſed then of doing as he ought. We are unhappily too well acquainted with them to judge thus; and ſee the caſe to be ſo very much otherwiſe, that, had we no other guide to direct our inquiries than our own reaſon, it would be impoſſible for us to ſay, with any certainty, how we come to be ſo inconſiſtent with ourſelves. But when once the ſcripture hath taught us, that we have loſt the primitive ſtrength and uprightneſs in which God created man, all the reſt is eaſy.

For we are ſurrounded here, on every ſide, with worldly objects, capable of giving us pleaſure and pain; and of ſtirring up, in our corrupted natures, exceſſive emotions of deſire, hope, fear, anger, ſorrow. Theſe paſſions importunately ſolicit our attention; and, according to the degree in which they are gratified, engroſs it to themſelves, till we find ſo many earthly things to long after or to dread, to love or to hate, to rejoice in or to lament; and that with ſuch immoderate earneſtneſs, that virtue and religion are ſeldom thought of, and ſeldomer ſtill to any good purpoſe: their obligations are, at ſome times, with miſerable ſubtlety eluded; and at others reſolutely and deſperately broken through, even when we ſee what we are doing, and ſee the conſequences.

Theſe are the daily effects of being too ſtrongly moved by the things of this life. And they are bitter ſtreams, that will flow till the fountain of our hearts * is healed and *purified by faith* †, in that grace which our bleſſed Lord hath procured for us by his death, and offers to us in his goſpel. Whatever we allow to make the greateſt impreſſion upon our minds, that will have the greateſt influence on our conduct; and by degrees exclude every thing elſe. It is our Saviour's determination, that *no man can ſerve two maſters* ‡; that is, when their commands interfere. We may, indeed, change from one to another, and ſo be faithful to neither, and diſpleaſe both. But whatever we permit for the preſent to engage our attention, that for the preſent we ſhall purſue, and paſs by or trample upon every thing elſe which may ſtand in our way to it. Thus, if we indulge conſiderably the love of pleaſure, of gain, of advancement, we may deſign indeed, or think we deſign, along with it, to keep within the bounds of temperance, of juſtice, of humility, and preſerve a due regard to the intereſts of a future ſtate; but theſe purpoſes will be ineffectual: the objects to which our fallen nature is prone, will, by the help of but a little partiality in their favour, fill our ſouls, and bias our actions. Again: if we ſuffer ourſelves to be diſcompoſed by the happineſs of others, we ſhall grow envious; if by injuries from others, we ſhall grow revengeful. If we let the more harmleſs paſſions of fear and ſorrow become predominant, we ſhall unfit ourſelves for uſefulneſs in our ſtations, and weaken our ſenſe of gratitude for the bleſſings of life. If we only give a looſe to unmeaning fancy and caprice, we ſhall degrade the dignity of our ſpecies, and be hurried, not only into folly, but ſin. In what way ſoever inclination bears us along, beyond the ſober dictates of reaſon, we ſhall be continually, and almoſt irreſiſtibly, tempted to overlook and tranſgreſs thoſe rules of duty, which a better command of ourſelves would have enabled us to perceive, and diſpoſed us to obſerve.

Our Maker expects from us, that we ſhould firſt meaſure the value of things rightly, then eſteem them ſuitably to it. And

* 2 Kings i. 21, 22. James iii. 2. † Acts xv. 9.
‡ Matth. vi. 24. Luke xvi. 13.

And almoſt the only error by which we fail of this, is being affected too much by the concerns of the preſent world, and from thence too little by thoſe of thé next. There is, it muſt be owned, a great variety of wickedneſs amongſt men, and ſins directly oppoſite to each other. But in one point they agree notwithſtanding; that the commiſſion of them all is greatly owing to the ſame inconſiderate eagerneſs, by which we paint to ourſelves things here below in much too ſtrong colours, and receive ſuch deep impreſſions from them, as efface, for the time at leaſt, all the dictates of prudence and of conſcience. Indeed, over-much vehemence, even in matters that appear to have no tendency towards guilt, is both wrong in itſelf, and habituates men to the ſame vehemence on worſe occaſions. Nay, zeal for things that ſeem, or even are, good and laudable, if it exceed bounds, frequently miſguides great numbers, either to miſtake very ſtrangely what they mean to aim at, or to uſe methods for attaining it which are quite unjuſtifiable. This hath been ſo dreadfully the caſe in political and religious diſputes, that every one diſpoſed to uncommon heat about either, hath peculiar need to examine his heart, whether what he imagines to be neceſſary earneſtneſs in the cauſe of God or his country, be not wholly or in part ſinful impetuoſity; and to watch carefully againſt that extreme, which may be as bad, or worſe than the lukewarm indifference of others.

Moderation then, about every thing relative to this world, is highly requiſite for the practice of our duty. I proceed now to ſhew you,

II. That it is not leſs for the preſent happineſs of our lives.

Every one of our paſſions, appetites and inclinations, when raiſed too high, is capable of giving us very uneaſy agitations of mind; and ſome, if indulged at all beyond reaſon, are grievouſly painful to ourſelves, and many ways prejudicial to thoſe amongſt whom we live. They, of courſe, will be enticed or provoked to the ſame unreaſonableneſs of which they have ſeen us guilty: and thus it is, that ſins and ſufferings propagate one another, and increaſe without end. But here I would conſider more diſtinctly the bad conſequences of immoderate deſire and anger, fear and grief.

They that will not reſtrain their deſires, muſt often earneſtly wiſh for ſatisfaction, which they cannot in the leaſt hope to obtain; and this directly brings on repinings, deſpondence, miſery. And uſually ſuch as do hope, will alſo fear; and continue, perhaps a long time, in a very diſagreeable ſuſpenſe between both. Or let hope, if it can, be ſo ſtrong as to exclude fear, and full expectation give the utmoſt pleaſure, not to ſay, that ſuch pleaſure, whilſt it laſts, is tumultuous, waſtes the ſpirits, and wears the frame; only think how often, in a world ſo uncertain, it will vaniſh all at once; and what effects a ſudden fall from this paradiſe muſt have on a mind impatient and undiſciplined! But ſuppoſing no ſuch diſappointment to happen; perſons of an eager and reſtleſs temper, after gaining one point, are apt to be immediately juſt as ſolicitous about another; ſo they are always in purſuit, and never contented. *What hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the ſun? All his days are ſorrows, and his travel grief: yea, his heart taketh not reſt in the night. This alſo is vanity* *. Very gentle and governable deſires would ſufficiently excite us to conſider what is really worth acquiring, and to beſtow upon it the labour which it deſerves. Beſides, not uncommonly people miſs the object of their wiſhes, merely by over-great anxiety about obtaining it. And being anxious for any thing beyond its capacity of giving us true happineſs, can do us no ſervice, but much harm it eaſily may. Now, that the ſeveral things which mankind run after ſo paſſionately, do not make them happy, is a notorious fact. Every day we ſee thoſe, who have been the moſt ſucceſsful in the race, as miſerable as any; or we might ſee it, if we would, with the leaſt reflection. And to what is it then that they are ſacrificing the real preſent enjoyment of their beings?

Another paſſion, in which we are extremely prone to be exceſſive, and wretched by the exceſs, is anger. We let very ſmall matters move us very greatly; ſometimes imaginary faults of others; and ſo we diſquiet and torment ourſelves, as well as them, without any manner of cauſe. A little ſtudy of moderation would prevent all this, and more evil; would ſuppreſs

* Eccl. ii. 22, 23.

ſuppreſs that abſurd unreaſonableneſs, which puts us often out of humour, and now and then violently, without knowing why we are ſo; would teach us to diſtinguiſh (which we commonly forget to do), thoſe who have not offended us from thoſe who have; and would never allow us to puniſh the innocent with the guilty. For want of this, reſentment boils within us, and perhaps flames out to our extreme hurt, in ſeveral reſpects, againſt ſuch as very innocently, from accident or ignorance, or a juſt regard to themſelves or their friends, or, it may be, a kind one to us, ſtand in the way of any thing that we want to do or have. But even ſuppoſing that men really treat us ill, yet it muſt be our wiſdom and our intereſt to conſider coolly what alleviations may be pleaded; what miſtake or inadvertence of theirs, what indiſcretion of ours, or ſuggeſtion of others, may have occaſioned the miſdemeanor. And a calm temper will preſume, that there may be alleviations, where none appear. Or if there be none, it would ſtill reflect, that in this world things will go wrong, and human creatures act amiſs; that we muſt prepare ourſelves for ſuch events, and not be ſhocked at them; that the offender is our brother, whom we ought to love; and that, with all his faults, we are but too like him; ſubject, if not to the ſame, yet to others; and poſſibly, all circumſtances weighed, nearly as bad, or worſe. Now, ſuch reflections, made habitual, would contribute unſpeakably to the tranquillity and comfort of our lives. Anger always gives pain to him who feels it; and we ſhould avoid feeling that pain as much as we can. It riſes alſo, with amazing ſuddenneſs, almoſt in ſpite of us, if once we give it vent, to the moſt unexpected and pernicious extremities. Even the lower degrees of it diſpleaſe, and are intended to diſpleaſe, the perſons againſt whom it is expreſſed: this excites them to make ſuch returns as cannot fail to be uneaſy to us, but often do us great, and laſting, and irreparable miſchief: and from hence a very large part of the miſery that men undergo, proceeds. We have but ſeldom really conſiderable provocations; and therefore it is abſurd to be affected, as if we had them frequently: and how conſiderable ſoever they may be, it is highly imprudent to let ourſelves be hurried away, we know not whither, by a blind and injurious rage, the parent of innumerable in-

conveniences and fruitleſs repentance, inſtead of *poſſeſſing our ſouls in patience* *; and endeavouring to remove, by *meekneſs of wiſdom* †, whatever would make our paſſage through life uncomfortable. But we ought to be ſingularly mild towards thoſe who in reality give us no provocation; as they certainly do not, who only preſume to differ from us in opinion, be it in religion or politics, or any other point. Yet ſuch differences have produced more of that *wrath of man*, which *worketh not the righteouſneſs of God* ‡, more bitter contentions, and more ſhocking barbarities, even amongſt the profeſſed diſciples of the *meek and lowly* § Jeſus, than almoſt any other cauſe hath done any where on earth.

Two other paſſions, nearly allied, which often run to a miſerable exceſs, are fear and grief: as indeed, when deſire of and delight in any thing of this world is too vehement, the apprehenſion of loſing it will be vehement in proportion. And therefore we muſt endeavour to moderate the two former of theſe emotions, if we would moderate the latter effectually. But indeed, we can often be much afflicted on parting with that in which we had little pleaſure, and extremely diſturbed with fear of what is by no means likely to happen; or, if it ſhould happen, would do us but little harm; and will certainly do us not the leſs, but the more, for being immoderately diſquieted about it beforehand, or grieved at it afterwards. But I ſhall dwell no longer on theſe two paſſions, becauſe the weakneſs and wretchedneſs of indulging them is univerſally acknowledged; though that acknowledgment is far from putting men ſufficiently on their guard againſt them. Only it ſhould be added here, that avoiding exceſs of anxiety, under the troubles of life, as it is a very common meaning of the word tranſlated *moderation*, was that, in all likelihood, which St. *Paul* had chiefly in his mind. For it immediately follows: *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God: and the peace of God ſhall keep your hearts and minds, through Jeſus Chriſt* ||.

Here, therefore, I ſhall conclude this head. For there would be no end of reckoning up minutely the inſtances of being

* Luke xxi. 19. † James iii. 13. ‡ James i. 20.
§ Matth. xi. 29. ‖ Phil. iv. 6, 7.

being too ſtrongly agitated by worldly things, and the miſchiefs that follow it: precipitate judgments, raſh reſolutions, and haſty choices, made and perſevered in; partial fondneſſes, unreaſonable averſions, endleſs animoſities, obſtinate purſuits of our own ruin; then utter diſcontent with ourſelves, the whole world, and the Maker of it; every folly, every ſin and ſuffering, of which an ungoverned mind is capable.

Thus then the preſent wiſdom appears of diligently cultivating, and, I muſt add (for without it all your diligence will be in vain), earneſtly praying for that calmneſs and *moderation* of ſpirit, which the apoſtle requires that we ſhould not only have, but ſhould alſo *let it be known unto all men:* an expreſſion comprehending ſeveral particulars of great moment; that we ſhould not be ſatisfied with our own opinion; that we rule our paſſions well (a matter about which we are daily deceived), but proceed in the diſcipline of them, till every one elſe allows us to be maſters; that the good effects of our compoſure ſhould be perceived and felt, not only at ſome times, and by ſome perſons, but always by all who are concerned with us; and, laſtly, that we ſhould be careful to ſhew the world around us, by our example, ſet before them with decency and modeſty, how poſſible, how becoming, how beneficial, the practice of this virtue is.

And the motive, ſubjoined to this precept, is a powerful one indeed; which, therefore, I propoſed to lay before you

III. Its importance to our obtaining a favourable ſentence in the approaching day of judgment, and eternal bleſſedneſs in our future life. *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*

However plainly it appears, that ſtrict ſelf-government is the true ſecret for ſelf-enjoyment here, yet the whole world hath agreed and reſolved upon it, that the contrary ſhall be true; that the life for a man to lead, who will make the moſt of his time on earth, is in a courſe of eager deſires, vehement purſuits, and high expectations, unbounded indulgence in what he likes, and keen reſentments againſt all that would diſappoint him. Each confirms the other in this way of thinking and acting. That we ſee one another miſerable by it, nay, feel ourſelves to be ſo, this avails not; we go on ſtill; and ſcarce any one hath the courage to truſt himſelf, and call

the judgment of mankind in queſtion. If it muſt be ſo then, let that point be inſiſted on no longer. But be the happineſs of this life what it will; yet if this life be not all; if it be but a ſmall part of what we are concerned in, it will deſerve but a ſmall part of our attention. And looking on human affairs in this light, will ſoon place before us a very different ſcene from that which uſually attracts our eye. Here we are purſuing pleaſures, riches, rank, power, ſome imagination or another, belonging ſolely to this preſent ſtate of things, as our great good: our whole hearts are engaged and overwhelmed in fears and hopes, and joys and ſorrows, ariſing from theſe objects, and nothing elſe; for any continuance affects them. Yet all the while, this preſent ſtate, and every thing in it, is confeſſedly a trifle, compared to that eternal one, which is to follow. What are we about then, and how unaccountably do we deceive ourſelves! We are not really miſerable, if things go contrary to our wiſhes here: we are not truly happy, if they go according to them. This world looks conſiderable, becauſe its objects are near and glaring; but it deludes us. The whole that we have to do with it, is the leaſt and meaneſt part of the buſineſs of our exiſtence: and the time will come, when we ſhall ſee its enjoyments and its ſufferings, all it can promiſe or threaten, to be nothing; and that the difference between having gone through it in proſperous or adverſe circumſtances, is not worth mentioning. Now, what we ſhall ſee to be true hereafter, is true at preſent: and we ſhould endeavour to be affected by it accordingly. If we were, we ſhould be little affected by any thing beſides; but ſhould paſs our days in a happy calm; and pity thoſe, who voluntarily fill theirs with diſturbance and hurry; *walk in a ſhadow, and diſquiet themſelves in vain* *.

But the thought of a future ſtate hath a yet further and ſtronger influence in this caſe. The felicity of it is provided for thoſe only, who have made themſelves fit for it, through the help of God's grace, by an innocent behaviour, and religious frame of ſoul; neither of which is conſiſtent with being attached and given up to the things here below. A heart and affections tied down to them, will grow like them; become

* Pſ. xxxix. 6-7.

come earthly and baſe, inſenſible of pious and virtuous movements, unmeet for *the inheritance of the ſaints in light* *. *If any man love the world* inordinately, *the love of the Father is not in him* †. They are different ſpirits, thwarting each other continually; and we have only to chuſe of which we will be, for of both we cannot.

And it is a moſt weighty conſideration towards determining our choice, that the time which we have, either for buſying and gratifying ourſelves here, or preparing for hereafter, is of ſmall duration. For *the Lord is at hand.* All that we can hope or dread, enjoy or ſuffer, in the preſent ſtate, will ſoon be over, poſſibly very ſoon; and all that we can do to qualify us for the next, how much ſoever we want, muſt be done in a very ſhort ſpace of time. The holy and ſelf-denying Jeſus, who expects and will aſſiſt us to imitate him, but will caſt us off entirely if we neglect it, he hath ſaid, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work ſhall be* ‡. The truth of theſe things we all know; the conſequences of them we all muſt ſee; and no words can make them plainer.

Not that either the affections or the appetites of our nature are to be extirpated, but only confined within due bounds. The neceſſaries of each one's condition in life are ſtill to be provided, becauſe they are neceſſaries. The duties, which we owe to each other here, are diligently to be done, becauſe they are duties. The comforts of life too, as they ought to be thankfully received, may doubtleſs be cheerfully uſed. Nay, even as to the lighter amuſements, if we make them not a buſineſs, but a relaxation only, at fit times, and in a fit degree; ſince our infirmity may demand a little of them, that little cannot but be lawful. It is, in truth, if we would conſider juſtly, a very humbling reflexion to think we need them; but ſince we do, ſo much as we need muſt be innocent. And to perplex ourſelves with ſcruples about ſmall matters of this kind, would be at once diſtruſting the goodneſs of God, inſtead of enjoying it properly; and making our lives uneaſy to ourſelves, and religion unamiable to others. But though errors on this ſide ought to be mentioned, and are very pitiable

* Col. i. 12. † 1 John ii. 15. ‡ Rev. xxii. 12.

able when they happen; yet they are far from being common. It is the oppoſite extreme that mankind in general want to be guarded againſt. Let us then remember, that whatever lengths we go in the indulgence of any inclination beyond what is on one account or another plainly requiſite, we ſhould be ſure to proceed with ſerious caution; for human virtue is very weak, and the ſolicitations of things preſent very powerful. In reaſon indeed they are of ſmall moment; but in fact they are infinitely difficult to ſit looſe to them, and reſerve our ſouls for worthier objects. *Take heed* therefore to *yourſelves*, that you *ſay* not *in your hearts, my Lord delayeth his coming*, and either *begin to ſmite your fellow-ſervants*, or *to eat and drink with the drunken: take heed, leſt your hearts be overcharged with the cares* or the pleaſures, the reſentments or the ſorrows *of this life; and that day come upon you unawares* *. For *this I ſay, brethren, the time is ſhort. It remaineth, that they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this world, as though they uſed it not. For the faſhion of this world paſſeth away* †.

* Matth. xxiv. 48, 49. Luke xxi. 34. † 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

SER-

SERMON CXVI.

On the Contrast of Respect and Remembrance, and of Contempt and Forgetfulness to Good and Bad Men.

Prov. x. 7.

The memory of the juſt is bleſſed: but the name of the wicked ſhall rot.

FROM theſe words I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

I. How great a concern men naturally have to leave an honourable memory behind them.

II. What care God hath taken, that both the good and the bad ſhall be eſteemed after death, as they deſerve.

III. What care we ought to take of the ſame thing.

I. That men have naturally an earneſt ſolicitude to leave an honourable memory behind them.

This indeed is not expreſſed, but evidently implied in the text; which being doubtleſs intended as a motive to good actions, and a diſcouragement from bad, can yet be neither, unleſs mankind are influenced by regard to future fame: which indeed they are to a very high degree. All men, in all ages, with extremely few exceptions, if any, have both deſired and endeavoured, that others ſhould entertain a good opinion of them; and, if poſſible, a great one. To this purſuit, multitudes have ſacrificed their eaſe, their intereſt, the deareſt of their other paſſions, and their lives themſelves. They who have failed in it, have given the ſtrongeſt, and ſometimes moſt ſhocking and fatal, proofs of their uneaſineſs: they who have ſucceeded, have always expreſſed the higheſt joy in the acquiſition, and been celebrated and envied as happy perſons. Even the loweſt part of the world have thought the eſteem of their acquaintance, were the circle of them ever ſo narrow

or mean, well worth having: And the moſt deſtitute of any conſiderable advantage or accompliſhment to be valued for, have ſtill ſet up ſome claim to reputation, were it a trifling; were it a groundleſs, were it an abſurd one, rather than have none. They, who know they have forfeited their title to a good character, labour hard however, by concealing and palliating matters, to retain as much as they can of it. And even the abandoned to wickedneſs, who know their fellow-creatures in general muſt abhor them, ſtill aim at a little comfort from the wretched applauſes of their accomplices. They who take pains to get over the love of reputation, manifeſt, in ſpite of themſelves, the utmoſt fondneſs for it, whenever they can have it; and often grievous longings after it, in thoſe very caſes, where they have deſtroyed it irrecoverably with their own hands. Even they who affect to ridicule it as a folly and a cheat, have uſually nothing elſe in view than to obtain it, for a pretended ſagacity in detecting the cheat. Nay, ſuch as think their duty binds them to extirpate it from their breaſts, as a frailty and a ſin, certainly think they deſerve, and almoſt conſtantly ſhew they expect, much the more of it on that account. A truly good perſon, indeed, will always, in the firſt place, *ſeek the honour, which cometh from God only* *. For if *we love the praiſe of men more than his* †; our Saviour hath warned us, by the example of the Jews, who were highly guilty of this weakneſs, that we ſhall neither judge nor act as we ought. And it would be a juſtly ruinous miſtake, either to do bad things for the favourable opinion of thoſe around us, or good things *to be ſeen of them* only, and *have* that for *our reward* ‡; inſtead of *ſetting God always before us* §, and *ſeeking for glory, honour and immortality* ‖, by approving our hearts and lives to him. But ſtill, deſire of being eſteemed by our fellow-creatures, conſiſtently with, and in ſubordination to, our Maker's approbation, is a natural, and therefore an innocent paſſion, prompts us to what is right, and ſupports us in it; and ſurely we have need of every ſupport. Nor doth reaſon only, but revelation recommend it to us, even in the more perfect diſpenſation of the New Teſtament

* John v. 44. † John xii. 43. ‡ Matth. vi. 1, 5.
§ Pſ. xvi. 8. ‖ Rom. ii. 7.

ment itſelf; exhorting us to the practice of righteouſneſs and peace from this motive: *For he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God and approved of men* *.

But we not only all deſire an honourable repute, each according to his notion of it, in our lifetime; whilſt it may be ſerviceable to us, to be thought well of, and muſt at leaſt be pleaſing to be told that we are; but we have earneſt deſires alſo of being remembered, as much to our advantage as poſſible, after we are gone. Accordingly, influenced by this hope, we both do and ſuffer a great deal to accompliſh things, the credit of which we ſhall live but a very little while to enjoy; nay, which perhaps will never be known till we are dead: we vindicate ourſelves to poſterity, with almoſt as great ſolicitude, as to thoſe of our own times; and feel it a powerful ſupport under the heavieſt cenſures that lie upon us now, if we can hope, that ſuch as come after us, will judge more impartially, and hold us in eſteem.

Yet, all the while, we have little or no imagination, that we ſhall be then within reach of hearing what is ſaid of us; or, in any manner whatever, benefited by praiſe, or hurt by reproach. For which reaſon, ſome men, who are very ſenſible of what uſe a preſent good character is, have treated all concern for poſthumous fame as a mere abſurdity; and valued themſelves upon detecting it. Now really if it were one, it would be ſo palpable a one, that finding it out would be no mighty diſcovery. But indeed it is a gracious and wiſe proviſion of our Maker, for the happineſs of his creatures: and the contrary perſuaſion ariſes, not from depth of inquiry, but ſuperficialneſs.

In many, if not moſt things, providence hath appointed our pleaſure here below to proceed much more from purſuit and expectation beforehand, than from enjoyment afterwards; by which method, we have plainly ſome happineſs both ſooner and ſurer, than if it began only with the attainment of our wiſhes. It is true, we muſt alſo have ſome diſappointment from hence; but this (beſides that reaſon and experience will keep it from being exceſſive), may by religion be rendered extremely uſeful; as it ſhews, that complete and laſting ſa-

* Rom. xiv. 18.

tisfaction is not to be had on earth. Nay, if obtaining our deſires were to give us no pleaſure, indeed if we were never to obtain them, yet the pleaſure we have in the proſpect of obtaining them would certainly be valuable, in proportion to the degree of it; only abating for the uneaſineſs at laſt of finding ourſelves miſtaken. But now, in the caſe before us, though it were allowed that perſons do not enjoy, after their deaths, the reputation in which they are then held, yet they enjoy it long before, and that without any abatement to follow at all: for ſurely they are not uneaſy in the other world, for want of knowing how they are honoured in this.

Beſides, as virtuous and beneficent actions are by far the moſt certain way of procuring any durable eſteem from mankind, ſo planting in us a deſire of ſuch eſteem as may endure when we are gone, is providing no ſmall ſecurity for our good behaviour here; and, conſequently, for our own happineſs, and that of all with whom we are concerned; but particularly of our children, relations and friends, who will doubtleſs be more regarded on account of the fair character that we have left behind us, and incited to imitate that conduct for which they ſee our memory honoured.

So that this principle, far from being an impoſition on mankind, and a prejudice to be rooted out, is an important bleſſing, conferred on us by Heaven, and diligently to be cheriſhed, even were it abſolutely certain, that the dead neither have, nor ever ſhall have, any knowledge of the reſpect that is continued to them after their deceaſe. But indeed it is by no means certain, that good perſons departed may not, in their preſent intermediate ſtate, or however in that after the laſt judgment, receive conſiderable delight from knowing, ſome way or other, that the characters which they have deſerved, have not been denied them, but honourably paid by their ſurvivors. For as the deſire of being eſteemed, is a natural principle, and one which worthy men, beyond others, cultivate and improve, why ſhould we doubt of its ſubſiſting hereafter, and being gratified? It is true, the bleſſed in heaven will be much above feeling pain from any injurious treatment of their names on earth; but why may they not enjoy pleaſure from a juſt regard ſhewn them? eſpecially as this pleaſure comprehends in it rejoicing that others do their du-

ty, and that too ſuch a part of their duty, as muſt ſingularly encourage the general practice of virtue. Beſides, the good influence of their memory is one way, amongſt others, by which they have faithfully endeavoured to be uſeful amongſt men; and why ſhould not the knowledge, that they have in ſome degree at leaſt ſucceeded, be one ingredient in their reward?

No wonder then, if we rejoice now in the proſpect of what we may hope will give us joy to all eternity: no wonder if the wiſe ſon of *Sirach* directs us: *Have regard to thy name; for that ſhall continue with thee above a thouſand great treaſures of gold. A good life hath but a few days; but a good name endureth for ever**.

Still, it is extremely evident (and yet very needful to remind men who are ſtrangely forgetful of it), that all this muſt be cautiouſly underſtood of ſuch reputation only as is truly good; fought from proper motives, and purſued by proper means. For if people affect to be admired for excellencies, which they have not, their attempt of cheating mankind will probably be as vain, as it is certainly unjuſt. If they court fame by qualifications of little or no value, all that they can gain by it, will be of little or no uſe to the world or themſelves; and if they aim at it by methods that do harm amongſt men, the higher their ambition riſes, and the more fully it ſucceeds, the greater miſery they will bring down, not only on others, but on their own heads too. Yet how dreadfully large are the numbers of thoſe who have aſpired to reputation by the moſt inſignificant accompliſhments; either from not knowing them to be ſuch, or from deſpair of acquiring better: of thoſe, who, unwilling to labour honeſtly for a character, have thought to purchaſe it cheaper by falſehood and fraud; nay, of thoſe alſo, who, not diſtinguiſhing between a great fame and a good one, or, however, preferring the former before the latter, have choſen rather to be talked of and wondered at for the ſurpriſing things which they have done (however miſchievous), than eſteemed and loved for ſuch beneficent actions as they had in their power. And every one of theſe not only goes wrong himſelf, but contributes

* Eccluſ. xli. 12, 13.

tributes to lead others into the ſame miſtake, or to prevent their diſcerning it, when once made.

The happineſs of men, therefore, is greatly concerned in avoiding ſuch errors: and, as we are ſo very apt to fall into them, the goodneſs of God is very conſpicuous in pointing them out ſo clearly in ſcripture; not only ſtigmatizing thoſe *whoſe glory is in their ſhame* *, but warning us againſt ſo exceſſive an admiration, even of things in themſelves valuable, as interferes with the ſuperior regard we owe to real piety and virtue. *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth: for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord* †. And though the word of God moſt frequently and chiefly inſiſts on other and nobler motives to a due regulation of our love of fame, yet is it far from either forgetting or ſlighting this inferior one; that by a worthy conduct we ſhall obtain our deſire, and by a criminal one fail of it entirely. For *the memory of the juſt is bleſſed: but the name of the wicked ſhall rot.* Let us therefore proceed to examine,

II. What care the goodneſs and juſtice of God have taken that both theſe things ſhall be ſo.

Now, two methods which he hath employed, have been mentioned already. He hath formed the hearts of men to eſteem virtue, and abhor wickedneſs, wherever they ſee or remember it. And he hath made the happineſs of men, private and public, greatly depend on the encouraging right actions by as durable honours as they can, and diſcountenancing wrong ones by as laſting infamy. So that if people will act ſuitably either to their beſt inward principles, or their evident intereſt, God hath made it ſecure, that the aſſertion laid down in the text ſhall be verified. And that, beſides this general proviſion founded in our nature, there is alſo a particular providence, cauſing the memory of the juſt and good to flouriſh out of their aſhes, and blaſting that of the wicked, not only may be concluded, with very probable reaſon, from the

* Phil. iii. 19. † Jer. ix. 23, 24.

the divine attributes, but collected from expreſs declarations of ſcripture on this head. *The righteous ſhall be had in everlaſting remembrance: his horn ſhall be exalted with honour. The ungodly ſhall ſee it, and it ſhall grieve him; he ſhall gnaſh with his teeth, and conſume away: the deſire of the ungodly ſhall periſh *, and the candle of the wicked ſhall be put out †.*

Undoubtedly it would be a more pleaſing conſideration to worthy men, and ſeemingly a more efficacious one, if they could always hope, that preſent reſpect would be paid to their characters whilſt living, as well as future to their memories when dead. And for the moſt part it is paid in a good meaſure; at leaſt by ſuch perſons as they chiefly deſire ſhould approve their conduct; and in ſuch proportions, as are very ſufficient to give them ſenſible comfort and ſpirit to go on. But ſtill the deficiencies in this reſpect are great, and the cauſes of thoſe deficiencies many. Sometimes the imperfection of their goodneſs, ſometimes the ſtrictneſs of thoſe rules which they find neceſſary to preſerve it, and ſometimes alſo, for it muſt be owned, unneceſſary peculiarities and imprudences which obſcure it (as little faults will frequently hide great excellencies); theſe things, I ſay, often hinder very valuable men, though it is pity they ſhould, from being eſteemed in any tolerable degree like what they ought to be. And there are other yet greater hindrances, ariſing from other quarters: from the madneſs and wickedneſs of party zeal; from the hatred of the vicious and irreligious to thoſe who often muſt oppoſe them, and always by their example at leaſt put them to ſhame; from the envy of moderately good people, to ſuch as one way or other come in competition with them; and from the inattention of moſt people to preſent merit, ſeen familiarly by them every day.

But ſtill, neither ought theſe things to be any diſcouragement to us, nor are they any objection to the wiſdom of Providence. For, on the whole, it would probably not be to the advantage of good perſons, but far from it, to have all the debt, which mankind owes them, paid immediately. It might endanger their humility, lead them to an uncharitable contempt of others, and a hazardous confidence in themſelves.

Both

* Pſ. cxii. 6, 9, 10. † Prov. xxiv. 20.

Both their virtue and their peace would be leſs ſecure, the higher their reputation was raiſed; and the more they were influenced to what is good by the preſent applauſe of men, the leſs proof they would give to their own hearts, as well as to the world, of ſeeking the future approbation of God; and of acting from that faith in things unſeen, which ought to be the main principle of their conduct, and ſhall be the main foundation of their reward. Therefore, inſtead of being ſo angry as we commonly are, when any one fails of doing our character juſtice; were they to do it ever ſo much injuſtice, we ſhould throw reſentment out of our thoughts, and look upon every outrage of this ſort as a means of improving ourſelves; and indeed as one good mark, that we are in ſome degree ſuch as we ought. For it is our Saviour's rule: *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*. Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſely, for my ſake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for ſo perſecuted they the prophets, which were before you†. Wo unto you, when all men ſhall ſpeak well of you: for ſo did their fathers to the falſe prophets‡.*

But when once good men are removed to another ſtate, all the reaſons, which made it unſafe for them to receive praiſe in this, are over; and moſt of the reaſons, that made others unwilling to beſtow it, are over too. Oppoſitions of intereſts are then uſually at an end; party animoſities cool, unjuſt imputations diſperſe and clear up; ſome begin to recollect, that they have been too vehement againſt thoſe that are gone; others, that they have been too negligent of them; their loſs is felt; their good qualities now ſtand in no man's way; their good deeds may be told without ſuſpicion of flattery; over their imperfections and ſingularities a veil is thrown, partly by time, partly by common humanity, which is acknowledged peculiarly due to the aſhes of the dead; we are ſurpriſed, that we could fail of diſcerning their worth ſooner; and we pay them a double honour in their graves, by way of amends for what

* John xv. 19. † Matth. v. 11. 12. ‡ Luke vi. 26.

what we defrauded them of before; not to ſay, that now and then we raiſe them a little higher, in hopes of depreſſing ſome that ſurvive.

By theſe means it comes to paſs, that though ſometimes *there is no remembrance of the wiſe man more than of the fool*, (which appeared to *Soloman*, whenever it happened, ſo great an evil, that *he hated life* on account of it *;) yet, generally ſpeaking, they who deſerve well have at length due acknowledgments paid to their memory. More extenſive merit will, as it ought, have more extenſive commendation. But ſuch as move in a narrower ſphere obtain, perhaps full as conſtantly, all they wiſhed for, and aimed at, in this reſpect: an honeſt repute, and friendly regret amongſt their acquaintance. And thoſe who are the leaſt known; who may ſeem, as the ſon of *Sirach* expreſſes it, to *have no memorial;* but to *periſh, as though they had never been:* if yet, as it follows in him, *they were merciful men*, it will be found, that *their righteouſneſs hath not been forgotten* †. They will almoſt always have ſome witneſſes to preſerve the knowledge of their good deſert; often ſuch as are little thought of: and though very ſmall notice may ſeem to be taken of them at preſent, yet ſooner or later they will be remembered; and miſſed perhaps a great deal more, than if they knew it, they would wiſh. Nay, even ſuch as *the world* hates and perſecutes, becauſe it *is not worthy of them* ‡; againſt whom it conſpires, as the Jews did againſt the prophet, ſaying, *let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered* §: if they have not, immediately on their deaths, the teſtimony borne them, which our Saviour, in the ſame caſe, had on his, *certainly this was a righteous man* ‖; yet, in proceſs of time, they *obtain*, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, *a good report through faith* ¶. Or how long ſoever the piety and virtue of any perſons may be hid and overwhelmed, yet, as he *who ſeeth* what is done *in ſecret, will reward them openly* **; let them ever comfort themſelves, with being well aſſured, that if the world overlooks, or even oppreſſes them for a while, it will not always do ſo: for the day is coming, of which Chriſt himſelf hath ſaid, *Whoſoever*

* Eccl. ii. 16, 17. See alſo ix. 15.
† Eccluſ. xliv. 9, 10.
‡ Heb. xi. 38.
§ Jer. xi. 19.
‖ Luke xxiii. 47.
¶ Heb. ii. 39.
** Matth. vi. 4.

ſhall confeſs me before men, (as every one doth, that, from a principle of conſcience adheres to his duty) *him ſhall the Son of Man confeſs before the angels of God**. And *then* at leaſt *ſhall the righteous*, in whatever obſcurity involved before, and by whatever calumnies blackened, *ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their father* †; *and ſtand in great boldneſs before the face of ſuch as afflicted them, and made no account of their labours; who eſteemed their life to be madneſs, and their end without honour* ‡.

But *as for the ungodly, it is not ſo with them* §: The undeſerved regard, which is too frequently paid them in their lives; as, generally ſpeaking, it muſt be inſincere, ſo it ſeldom outlaſts them any conſiderable time; their proſperity, that dazzled the eyes of man, vaniſhes; the fear or the favour, for which they were courted, influences no longer: their power of concealing and diſguiſing their ill deeds periſhes with them; things, which they hoped were for ever buried in darkneſs, riſe up againſt them; the ſuperficial agreeableneſs of ſlighter good qualities, that gilded over their more important bad ones, coming now to be leſs tenderly handled, ſoon wears off, and leaves them viſible in their full deformity; all who have been injured by them, and all who have been deceived in them, give vent to their indignation without reſtraint; their very partners in wickedneſs, inſtead of defending or excuſing them, often deſignedly preſs down their memories under an aggravated load of impuſations, to eſcape the more eaſily themſelves; and even the candid and good-natured, however averſe their inclination is to it, yet, from principle, give them up to the juſtice of public hate and infamy. Thus then doth *the name of the wicked rot*; becomes offenſive to mankind, during all the while it laſts; and ſometimes it laſts long, to be, as the ſcripture calls it, a *reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curſe* ‖; then moulders away, and falls gradually into oblivion, till the hour come, that *they who ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake; ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt* ¶.

You

* Luke xii. 8. † Matth. xiii. 43. ‡ Wiſd. v. 1, 4.
§ Pſ. i. 5. ‖ Jer. xxiv. 9. ¶ Dan. xii. 2.

You ſee therefore that God has not only declared in his holy word, that he will reward the good, and puniſh the bad in the next world; but has alſo even in this ſo eſtabliſhed the tendencies of things, that (ſuppoſing them to proceed at all in their courſe) virtue muſt at laſt be held in eſteem, and vice in abhorrence. Nor will it be in the power of unwiſe or wicked men, though they do their worſt, to prevent this in the main. Yet ſtill, in many particular inſtances, we may, if we will, both by deſign and negligence, diſappoint the purpoſes of heaven for the good of mankind. But if we apprehend it, as ſurely we muſt, to be our duty and our intereſt, rather to become labourers together *with God* *, and forward the execution of his all-wiſe counſels; we ſhall be diſpoſed to conſider,

III. In what manner we may beſt contribute to the due payment of thoſe very different regards, which belong to the memory of the bad and the good. For I beg leave, under this head, to invert the order of the text, and diſpatch the diſagreeable part of the ſubject firſt.

Now here, a principal thing to be obſerved is, that vehemence and bitterneſs are ſo unſuitable to the temper of religion, and yet we are ſo very prone to them, that whoever goes about to fix infamy on any one whom he diſlikes, whether living or dead, ſhould faithfully examine his own heart in the firſt place, and ſee *what ſpirit he is of* †. We cannot eaſily be too careful, (and it is very uncommon to be careful enough,) that neither the ſelfiſh paſſions of intereſt, envy, reſentment, nor the exceſs of any more generous principle, concern for public good, for virtue, for religion itſelf, ever move us to do injuſtice to any man's character: that we judge as mildly, as with reaſon we poſſibly can; and ſpeak yet more mildly than we judge. For there are multitudes of things, that may lead us into miſtakes, by which we may be guilty of grievous and cruel outrages againſt the reputation of perſons, who have done nothing amiſs, whilſt we mean perhaps only to be zealous in a good cauſe. Nay, indeed, were there no danger of miſtakes at all, ſeverity of juſtice ill becomes creatures, ſo liable to faults as men are. And ſeverity againſt the memo-

* 2 Cor. iii. 9. † Luke ix. 55.

ries of thoſe, who are gone to anſwer for what they have done, hath ſo peculiar an appearance of inhumanity, that we ſhould avoid it with double caution; whether they have lived in or near our own times, or in others ever ſo remote; though, in the former caſe, there is an additional conſideration to reſtrain us, that unneceſſary harſh treatment of worthleſs perſons deceaſed, cauſes grief, that might well be ſpared, to their worthy relations and friends that ſurvive.

But ſtill we are by no means forbidden, after all, to expreſs a moderate and prudent diſapprobation of bad people, either during their lives or after their deaths. On the contrary, due diſtinctions ought to be made; and ſhewing the characters of ſuch in their true light may be extremely requiſite; ſometimes for the juſtification of innocent men, and often for a warning to inconſiderate ones; that they may ſee, by the example of others, before it is too late, what ſort of fame they muſt expect to leave behind them, if they will act contrary to their duty; that they may not confound, with real ſubſtantial honour, thoſe empty diſtinctions of names and titles, which the worſt of men too frequently tranſmit to their poſterity; nor flatter themſelves, that even, in this undiſcerning world, there is any likelihood of *one event to the righteous and the wicked**, in point of reputation, whatever may happen in other reſpects. And eſpecially, where admiration of any plauſible character will probably ſeduce others into wrong conduct, there taking off the varniſh from it, and expoſing it naked to view, ſo far as may be requiſite to prevent any dangerous miſtakes, is an important duty.

But indeed, for the moſt part, the name of the wicked, if let alone, will rot of itſelf; and all that we ſhall need to do is, not to undertake the nauſeous and fruitleſs office of embalming it. To endeavour this for private advantage, is one of the meaneſt and baſeſt ſubſerviencies to ſin. And even where gratitude or relation may demand from us ſome regard for the memory of wicked men, we ſhould, however, always content ourſelves, with ſaying in their favour what we can with truth; and keeping ſilence, as much as we are able, concerning the reſt; but by no means take it amiſs, if every one elſe doth not

* Eccl. ix. 2.

not keep ſilence; nor expect in the leaſt, that they, who have deſerved ill upon the whole, ſhould be eſteemed by mankind, merely becauſe they have deſerved well of us. For, by that rule, every wicked wretch upon earth, in his turn, muſt have a good character inviolably preſerved to him.

But let us now proceed to the pleaſing part of our duty, the honours that we owe to the memory of the juſt; whether they lived in former days, or within our own knowledge.

Now, the regards due to them are briefly theſe: that we believe them, on proper evidence, to be the good perſons they were in reality; that we conſider their virtues with due eſteem, and their imperfections with due candour; that we vindicate their names from unjuſt imputations, and make honourable mention of them, whenever a fit opportunity offers; that we warn and arm ourſelves againſt the temptations both of proſperity and adverſity, by obſerving how they have gone through each; that we incite ourſelves to aim at more perfection in all Chriſtian graces, by ſeeing in them what heights of piety and goodneſs are attainable; that we learn watchfulneſs from their falls, and a ſpeedy and thorough repentance from their riſing again; that we thank God, in our retirements, for the inſtructions which his providence hath vouchſafed to us in their good lives; and beg of him wiſdom and ſtrength, *to walk* as they did, *not by* the *ſight* of things preſent, *but* the *faith** of things to come.

It may be hoped, we are none of us ſo unhappy, as not to have had ſome ſuch acquaintance amongſt the great numbers of another ſort, with whom we ſeldom fail to aſſociate. And we are doubly to blame, if neither the good examples of ancient days, acknowledged by all men, nor the recent virtues that we have ſeen in our contemporaries, ſome of them perhaps endeared to us by nearneſs of relation, or ties of friendſhip, can attract our affections, and engage our imitation. Or if we have hitherto had no opportunity of being acquainted with ſuch perſons, yet, bad as the world is, they are ſtill to be found in it; and all that are weak in goodneſs, are eſpecially concerned to ſeek them out, take ſhelter under their

* 2 Cor. v. 7.

their protection, and invigorate themſelves by their aſſiſtance. But, alas, inſtead of this, we attend almoſt only to ſuch as can promote our worldly advantages, or favourite amuſements; or ſuch as enjoy an uncommon ſhare of either; to thoſe who can ſerve us, or delight us, we attach ourſelves firmly; thoſe who excel us in any part of the vanity and pride of life, we envy; account them the only happy men; and ſet our whole hearts on becoming happy in the ſame way: but ſerious, humble, ſelf-denying worth, we either quite overlook, or view with an eye of ſcorn, at beſt of contemptuous pity; ridicule, if not inveigh againſt it, the trueſt piety and virtue, if it goes the leaſt beyond that ſtandard which we have fixed for ourſelves, from no better authority than cuſtom or inclination; and are commonly much more ſevere againſt the involuntary or imagined failings of the beſt people, than the wilful and habitual ſins of the worſt. Thus we behave to the good in their lives: or if we do happen to treat them a little better then, yet, inſtantly on their deaths, we lay them aſide, and are glad to think no more of them, not even of our own obligations to them, though perhaps we have had very particular ones, and certainly a general one of great importance, that ſuch perſons are, as the ſcripture calls them, *the ſalt of the earth* *: preſerve the world by their wholeſome influence, though much too thinly ſpread over it, yet from being utterly corrupted; and ſo reſtrain and mitigate the wrath of God, by their prayers and interceſſions, that he often *ſpares the city for the* ſake of the few *righteous that are* therein †. Let us remember then, what reaſon we have to honour the good, both living and dead; and to mourn when *the faithful fail from among the children of men* ‡: let us obſerve, and point out to obſervation, the uſefulneſs and amiableneſs of religion in others; and make it as uſeful and amiable in ourſelves, as we poſſibly can: being not only admirers, but *followers alſo of them, who through faith and patience have inherited the promiſes* §. For loving and imitating them here, will qualify us for being happy in an eternal fellowſhip with them hereafter. And though it is a much lower conſi-

deration,

* Matth. v. 13. † Gen. xviii. 24. ‡ Pſ. xii. 1. § Heb. vi. 12.

deration, yet it is far from a contemptible one, that by honouring the characters of the worthy perſons who are gone before us, we ſhall beſt ſecure that ſurviving regard to our own, which we all deſire: and when *our bodies are buried in peace, our name ſhall live* *, and *our memorial not depart away* †.

* Eccluſ. xliv. 14. † Eccluſ. xxxix. 9.

SER-

SERMON CXVII.

(Preached on a General Faſt.)

On the Justice and Goodness of God to the Rational Creation.

2 Chron. xv. 2.

The Lord is with you, while ye be with him: and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you.

THESE words are the beginning of a ſerious admonition, given by the direction of Heaven to the nation of the *Jews*, as they returned from obtaining, under the conduct of *Aſa* their king, one of the greateſt victories recorded in ſcripture. Their condition, after this, might have appeared to human policy a very ſecure one: But the Divine Wiſdom ſaw the greateſt of all dangers impending over them, that which proceeds from forgetting God, and abandoning virtue. *And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Azariah the ſon of Oded, and he went out to meet Aſa, and ſaid unto him, Hear me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you, while ye be with him: and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you.* Now, theſe great truths, of which Heaven thought it needful to remind them, at the concluſion of a proſperous war, it muſt be very much more needful that we ſhould attend to, who ſeem to be only at the beginning of a doubtful one. And accordingly we are met here, by the command of authority, to conſider our ways,

and humble ourſelves before God for our ſins, as the neceſſary means for deriving a bleſſing on our arms, and reſtoring and perpetuating peace and proſperity to our country.

It is a melancholy conſideration, that creatures, endued with reaſon and humanity, ſhould ever come to employ force againſt one another, and make the dreadful addition of the miſeries of war to the many unavoidable ſufferings of life. But wicked as this is, when paſſion and reſentment, deſire of unjuſt gain, or fondneſs of infamous glory, prompts to it, yet when injuries of pernicious conſequence are done to a nation, and perſiſted in, and no competent redreſs can be obtained, it becomes then, both neceſſary for particular ſocieties, and beneficial to human ſociety in general, that invaded rights be vigorouſly aſſerted by the only way left. When the ſword is drawn for juſtice alone, and ever ready to be ſheathed as ſoon as that is granted, then Heaven may be appealed to, with hopes of a favourable *ſentence coming forth from his preſence, whoſe eyes behold the thing that is equal* *. But if the aſſertors of a righteous cauſe be in other reſpects a ſinful people, it is evidently juſt for God, who hath the cognizance of both theſe things, to regard whichſoever of them infinite wiſdom ſhall direct; and make even the injurious party *the rod of his anger, and the ſtaff in the day of his indignation* †, to correct, or deſtroy, if their wickedneſs deſerve it, ſuch nations, as though right in their diſputes with their enemies, are wrong at the ſame time in matters more important. And how little terror ſoever our enemies might give us at firſt, yet now we muſt be ſenſible, that we know not in the leaſt how ſoon and how formidably they may increaſe; but this we know certainly, that *there is no reſtraint to the Lord*, to puniſh, as well as *to ſave, by many, or by few* ‡. Times of war, therefore, add a peculiar ſtrength to thoſe admonitions, which reaſon and ſcripture give us at all times, to conſider what our ſtate is with regard to him, *who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth* §. Let us then all conſider now, whether we have ground of hope or of fear from that awful declaration of the prophet, which you have heard read.

* Pſal. xvii. 2. † Iſ. x. 5. ‡ 1 Sam. xiv. 6. § Dan. iv. 35.

The Lord is with you, while you be with him. To be with God, is to preſerve in our minds a reverent ſenſe of his being, preſence, and government; to keep cloſe to his laws, and ſtand on his ſide againſt the oppoſite power of darkneſs and ſin. Let us then think, if there be need of thought to anſwer, how is the reverence due to the Supreme Being preſerved among us? Have we not perſons who even ridicule the notion of a wiſe and good Maker of all things? Have we not thoſe, who, if they do admit a Creator, do not admit a Moral Governor of the world; or at leaſt repreſent him ſo very defective in his adminiſtration of it, as finally to let bad perſons be gainers by their wickedneſs, and good perſons loſers by their virtue: rejecting, with mirthful ſcorn, what hath ever been the hope and ſupport of wiſe and good men, the belief of that future ſtate, in which the viſible irregularities of the preſent ſhall be rectified? Have we not alſo too many, who, profeſſing perhaps to believe in natural religion, yet ſpeak of Chriſtianity, the great means by which it is both ſupported and perfected, not only as a falſehood, but an impoſſibility: *Blaſpheming that worthy name, by which we are called**; and diſdaining to receive from God himſelf, any other rules, either of faith or life, than ſuch as their own reaſon, directed by their own fancy, ſhall preſcribe to them? And let us ſuppoſe, if we can, that the number of ſuch as go theſe lengths deliberately, is upon the whole but ſmall; yet what ſhall we ſay of the inconſiderately guilty? Are there not multitudes of all degrees, who ſeem never once to have aſked themſelves, whether they believe in God or not? or if they do, whether any regard is due to him or none? who ſlight religion boldly, without imagining they have ever examined it; who are perſuaded of its truth, perhaps, ſo far as they have any perſuaſion about the matter, but have no notion that they are to regulate their conduct by it; who poſſibly do not quite approve of profane perſons, but are aſtoniſhed at pious ones; and by their indulgence to the former, and their very great proneneſs to deſpiſe the latter, plainly ſhew, whether they perceive it themſelves or not, which party they are on the road to join?

We

* James ii. 7.

We have indeed many ſtill who frequent divine worſhip: but how many of all ranks, and of that rank particularly, which ought to be an example, and will be one either of good or bad; how many that omit this duty entirely, or near it; and though it be an evident part of the law of nature, and an expreſs precept of Chriſtianity, can yet talk, not only of their own neglecting it, with much gaiety and humour, but of other perſons attending upon it as matter of conſcience, with much raillery? And ſuch an aſcendant hath this contemptuous kind of impiety got, that there are many perſons, who ſincerely honour their Maker in their hearts, but dare not, for fear of deriſion, ſhew it in their behaviour. Let it be thought of a little, what the appearance and conſtruction of theſe things is: and let thoſe who are qualified for it judge: Is not this the one nation upon earth, in which regard to God is taught in the greateſt purity, and treated with the greateſt contempt?

But a worſe ſymptom yet, is, that whilſt irreligious perſons are active in the cauſe of infidelity, ſome of them with ſo ſelf-denying a bigotry, as to teach it their ſervants, their very wives and children; the generality of ſuch as think themſelves very competently religious perſons, ſcarce appear to have any practical impreſſions at all made on them by thoſe truths, which they acknowledge for the law of their lives: They forget, it may be feared, almoſt totally, the exerciſe of private piety; and behave, in regard to public devotion, with a negligence, which they would think highly indecent towards their earthly ſuperiors; allow themſelves in ſuch levity of ſpeech, on the moſt ſerious ſubjects,* as would ſcarce be juſtifiable in ſome of the moſt trifling ones; form their conduct avowedly on principles, that have no tincture in them of the faith which they profeſs; and in effect declare themſelves to think of nothing but this world, whilſt yet they are really perſuaded of another to come. To this it muſt be added, that very many, who not only believe, but are influenced by their belief in other reſpects, inſtead of *confeſſing their Lord and Maſter before men*, as he hath moſt ſolemnly commanded them *, are ſilent and indifferent, whilſt

* Matth. x. 32. Mark viii. 38. Luke ix. 26.

he is denied or diſregarded ever ſo much; and ſeem aſhamed of a cauſe they ought to glory in: by which means they give bad perſons a colour for pretending, that few or none are Chriſtians in earneſt; and take away from ſuch as are well diſpoſed, the encouragement of ſeeing how great a number yet remains. For, God be thanked, they are ſtill no ſmall number, who continue, after all, bearing teſtimony to the goſpel of Chriſt. But of how many ſins againſt it, not a few even of theſe are guilty, at the ſame time, by deviating from *the form of ſound words* *, by unwarrantable diviſions, and uncharitable animoſities: it is a great deal better that they ſhould conſider, than that others ſhould ſay: only thus much cannot but be ſaid, that theſe things add a peculiar gloom to the view which we are taking.

Religion, it muſt be owned, hath never been practiſed anywhere as it ought. But have not both the practice and profeſſion of it decayed, moſt remarkably, in this nation, within the compaſs of but a few years? Is not the proſpect before us, that of its declining yet much lower in the generation that is coming on? and what do we imagine this will end in? If God is, it muſt be a matter of ill deſert, either wilfully or thoughtleſsly to treat him as if he were not. If he hath given a revelation of his will to mankind, it cannot be innocent to neglect it, as if he had given none. And if he is the righteous Governor of the world, he will ſupport his government by puniſhing where guilt appears. If the guilt be national, it muſt be expected the puniſhment will be ſo too. And though it were not, yet amidſt the innumerable connections of things, one part of a ſociety cannot ſuffer, but the whole muſt partake.

What judgments in particular God will execute at any time on impious nations, we cannot ſay. All nature is in his power: and they who offend, have every thing to fear. But one ſure method of correction (a very merciful method, as the lower degrees of it give warning of the higher, but a dreadful one indeed, if that warning be not taken), is by appointing the natural conſequences of every ſin to be part of its reward. The conſequences of irreligion then what are they,

* 2 Tim. i. 13.

they, and what muſt they be, on every community? True piety cannot induce men to injure their country; and comprehends peculiar inducements to ſerve it, of the greateſt force. But in times of public danger eſpecially, belief of religion gives a ſpirit, and defence of religion a motive for exerting it, which conſiderations of a lower nature will never equal. For what is there, that can equal the exhortation, *Be of good courage, and let us behave ourſelves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God: and let the Lord do that which is good in his ſight* *. *Fear not, neither be diſmayed: for the battle is not yours, but God's* †. Whereas, if ſome, through infidelity, have no hope in him, and others through wickedneſs have only fear of him, ſo far as theſe ways of thinking can influence, *all hands will be feeble, and every heart will melt* ‡.

But, indeed, the belief of a juſt and good being, who ſees and will reward, is at all times the great ſupport under the ſufferings of life, the great incitement to every thing worthy, the great reſtraint from every thing baſe. Human weakneſs evidently wants theſe things; and there is nothing elſe that can always furniſh them. The virtuous dictates of their own minds will have little influence comparatively on moſt men, when they are conſidered no longer as the voice of God ſpeaking inwardly to them. And the penalties of human laws, without thoſe of the divine law ſuperadded, will often be evaded, and not ſeldom deſperately braved. For if once men think there is nothing beyond death, they will ſoon come to think there is nothing in it, which ought to withhold them from preferring a ſhort life ſpent as they like, to a long one ſpent otherwiſe. Feeling themſelves free from the terrors of religion, they will fly out into profligateneſs, merely to ſhew they are free: And it will be encouragement enough to them, to purſue every appetite, paſſion, and fancy, without reſerve; that whatever inconveniencies may happen to ariſe from it, one moment can deliver them from all at once, whenever they pleaſe. How then will they act in the numberleſs caſes, to which the power of the magiſtrate either cannot or is not likely to reach at all, or but imperfectly at beſt? How, for inſtance,

* 1 Chron. xix. 13. † 2 Chron. xx. 15. ‡ Iſai. xiii. 7.

inſtance, will the properties and even the lives of men be ſecured, when perjury is no longer dreaded? A conſideration of peculiar weight in this country; where, with amazing inconſiſtence, we are multiplying oaths, as if we could depend upon them for every thing; and ſlighting the care of religion, which alone can give us cauſe to depend on them for any thing. But in general, what or whom can we poſſibly hope mankind will regard to any conſtant good purpoſe, if they will not regard God: and how can we pretend to regard him, whilſt we go on as we do? Nor let it be thought, that the belief of a future recompence is neceſſary to the lower part of the world alone; though if it were, they will never preſerve it long, when they ſee their ſuperiors have it not. But the higher mens ſtation, and the greater their power is, the more is the importance, both to others and themſelves, that they be ſtrongly influenced to do good and not evil, by this only motive that can never be outweighed.

It is very true, neither irreligious perſons are always ſo bad, nor religious ones always ſo good, as their notions lead them to be: But ſtill every way of thinking produces, more or leſs, its natural effects. The deeper root religion takes, the more benefit will ſpring from it: and the wider irreligion ſpreads, the more miſchief it will bring forth. At preſent, it muſt endeavour to appear as harmleſs as it can, to recommend itſelf; and ſome degree of the good old impreſſions will remain, and have influence for a time, even on thoſe who have done their beſt to wear them out. But when profaneneſs ſhall once have attained its maturity, then it will be felt, if men are reſolved not to ſee it before, which were in the right: the weak and credulous creatures, who contended for honouring God, or the perſons of ſuperior knowledge and freedom of thought, who ſcorned and forſook him.

But we muſt remember, our Maker is forſaken, when virtue, the law he hath given to mankind, is tranſgreſſed, as well as when his worſhip is deſerted, or his being denied. Let it then be a ſecond article of inquiry, what our condition is in this reſpect.

The conſequence appears a very plain one, that when religion decays, morals muſt. However, let us look into fact. In ſpeaking of virtues and vices relating to the public, no

matters

matters of controverſy ought ſo much as to be hinted at in this place: a place to be kept ſacredly ſeparate from the conteſts of parties; and only employed, when occaſion requires, to call on every party alike, as in the name of God, to conſider their doings. Where diviſions and mutual accuſations run ſo dreadfully high, there muſt be great faults on one ſide or other; it is well, if not on all. And all ſhould conſider very ſeriouſly, what they are aiming at, and by what means; what they are riſking, and to what good end. But that above the reſt ſhould be conſidered, which, it may be feared, is often thought of leaſt, what muſt become, whilſt each ſide is ſupporting itſelf by the methods too common, what muſt become of the virtue and integrity of this people, the moſt important part of all they have to be concerned for. Every other ſort of loſs nations have often recovered, and riſen again from the loweſt ebb; but loſs of probity and principle, this affects the vitals of ſociety; and whatever accidental advantages may ſeem to ariſe from it in any caſe for a time; if the diſtemper grows, and it is the hardeſt in the world to ſtop, its concluſion muſt be fatal. And let it not be objected, that countries of very little virtue and public ſpirit have flouriſhed notwithſtanding. For how have they flouriſhed? In a ſtate of freedom? No. Outward proſperity hath been joined with domeſtic oppreſſion; or if intervals of eaſe have been felt, they have always been precarious, and generally ſhort.

Impartial reflections on theſe matters will ſhew us very clearly the guilt and the danger of our ſins, with reſpect to the public. But we ſhall ſee both in a yet ſtronger light, if we reflect farther, how very little zeal we expreſs, in the midſt of all our vehemence about diſputed points, for the promotion of things indiſputably right. Propoſals for reformation are treated in the groſs as mere chimeras; mighty little harm apprehended from the moſt flagrant immoralities, but dreadful ill conſequences to liberty from reſtraining them: Laws treated with contempt by thoſe who ſhould obey them, and this connived at by thoſe who ſhould execute them; ſtill every one complaining immoderately of others, for what no one will himſelf contribute to amend.

But, indeed, public virtue, though it were genuine, will never be conſiſtent and univerſal, while private vices are indulged. And to what a deplorable degree theſe abound amongſt us, needs not be ſaid, how much ſoever it needs to be thought of. The intemperance, the promiſcuous lewdneſs, the want of induſtry and frugality, the diſregard to authority and order, the profligateneſs of all kinds, that hath overſpread, in a moſt uncommon manner the lower part of the people, every body ſees. And would but ſome of higher condition reflect, how much they have ſunk themſelves to a level with their inferiors, in ſome of the worſt of their qualities; and indeed contributed to make many of them ſo bad as they are, and themſelves deſpiſed by them at the ſame time; it might be hoped the conſideration would be uſeful. But not to ſay more of theſe; the faults of too many, who are accounted, and are in compariſon, decent and regular perſons; their improvident expenſiveneſs, pernicious many ways; their living to amuſements and pleaſures only, and overlooking the moſt ſerious obligations of life; forgetting the inſpection of their own conduct, their families and affairs; neglecting their very children, at leaſt in the important point of their religion and morals: Theſe are ſad inſtances of perſonal guilt, and make a great addition to the national danger.

But when, to the abovementioned epidemical ſins, every one hath added, after examining himſelf faithfully, the ſeparate tranſgreſſions of his own life, and the inward *plague*, which he hath permitted to infect *his own heart** ; unknown perhaps to men, but *naked and open to Him, with whom we have to do*† : then we ſhall have no doubt left, whether the total amount be not abundantly ſufficient to juſtify heaven, in whatever judgments it may inflict on us and our country. And if, for inſtance, by our contempt of true religion, we ſhould open a way for Popiſh ſuperſtition to overſpread us, after a ſhort preparatory reign of atheiſtical diſſoluteneſs; if our abuſes on all hands of the bleſſings of a free government ſhould introduce upon us a ſlavery of our own creating; if the ſinful exceſſes, that we have ſuffered wealth and plenty to lead us into, ſhould bring on us, as they naturally do, poverty and diſtreſs; and our domeſtic enmities

* 1 Kings viii. 38. † Heb. iv. 13.

enmities deliver us up to our common adverſary: *who ſhall have pity upon thee, O Jeruſalem, or who ſhall bemoan thee; or who ſhall go aſide to aſk of thy peace* *?

The common anſwer to all repreſentations of this ſort is, that the world hath always been bad; and therefore we have no peculiar reaſon to fear. But if it hath been always a place of wickedneſs, it hath always been a place of miſery too, by means of that wickedneſs. Continual efforts have been ever neceſſary to keep both from increaſing. And if we, whom God hath treated with ſuch diſtinguiſhing mercy, will not uſe theſe efforts, but abandon ourſelves to ſin; as he doth think fit to make ſome examples of his juſtice from time to time, what fitter example he can make, is hard to ſay.

Perſons, however, will flatter themſelves, that theſe, at the worſt, are dangers of very diſtant times. And every ſingle ſinner in the world flatters himſelf in juſt the ſame manner. Yet the conſequences of their ſins do overtake men, and may overtake nations too, with ſurpriſing ſuddenneſs. And the ſentence, recorded in ſcripture, is perfectly juſt: *They of the houſe of Iſrael ſay, the viſion that he ſeeth is for many days to come; and he propheſieth of times that are far off. Therefore ſhall none of my words be prolonged any more; but the word which I have ſpoken ſhall be done, ſaith the Lord God* †. *And they ſhall know, that I am the Lord; and have not ſaid in vain, that I would do this evil unto them* ‡.

Other perſons there are, who acknowledge the proſpect to be bad, and evil perhaps impending; But the only wiſe part in their opinion is, to let matters go as they will, and enjoy themſelves as long as they can: Why ſhould they be uneaſy before the time comes? Now, if it were certain, that nothing could do good, this might be reaſonable in a worldly view of things; but where every one may contribute, both by amending himſelf and awaking others, to prevent ruin; there to be indolent, is as contrary to humanity, as it is to religion. And therefore the word of God hath taken ſevere notice of it, as a great crime. *Ye have ſeen the breaches of the city of David, that they are many:—And in that day did the Lord God of hoſts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to girding with ſackcloth;*

* Jer. xv. 5. † Ezek. xii. 27, 28. ‡ Ezek. vi. 10.

ſackcloth; and behold joy and gladneſs, eating fleſh and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hoſts: Surely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till ye die, ſaith the Lord God of hoſts *.

But even they, who are concerned for the public, may yet expreſs that concern in a very faulty way. Many ſeem to think they have fully done their duty, as ſoon as they have been angry at thoſe, whom they apprehend to have any way occaſioned what is amiſs: angry, perhaps at the wrong perſons, perhaps in a wrong manner; ſuch as only tends to increaſe guilt, and haſten miſchief.

The firſt complaint, generally ſpeaking, is of thoſe in authority. And undoubtedly the people have a right to complain, whenever, the common concern is adminiſtered ill. But then it ſhould be conſidered, that we may, through ignorance or prejudice, expect from authority, either what it cannot do, or what is not fit to be done; we may expect more than is reaſonable to expect from men like ourſelves, though it be fit; and even ſuppoſing them very much to blame, we may conduct ourſelves upon it ſo as to be equally or yet more to blame. Want of reverence to laws and ſuperiors is one of our great evils; and all oppoſition to whatever is thought wrong, ſhould be accompanied with the ſtricteſt care not to augment this evil. But our duty requires us peculiarly to beware of raiſing domeſtic uneaſineſſes too high, when a foreign enemy may take advantage of them: and at all times it requires us to preſerve moſt religiouſly the loyalty and honour due to the ſupreme power; eſpecially now, when our preſent eſtabliſhment is our only human hope of having all that is valuable to us ſecured to ourſelves, and tranſmitted to our poſterity.

Next to the rulers of a nation, its inſtructors are uſually the great object of cenſure; and we acknowledge there is cauſe. We have not been ſo ſerious and religious, ſo zealous and diligent, ſo diſintereſted and humble, ſo mild and charitable, as we ought. The public muſt have ſuffered by this; we have ſuffered by it ourſelves; and, unleſs we repent, we have

* Iſa. xxii. 9, 12, 13, 14.

ground to expect a yet fuller execution, than we have experienced already, of what heaven inflicted on our predeceſſors in the *Jewiſh* nation: *Therefore have I alſo made you contemptible and baſe before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways* *. Yet we cannot but hope, that a very conſiderable part of the accuſations brought againſt us, would appear, upon inquiry, to be without foundation. But however that be, we muſt remind you, that our faults will be no excuſe for your tranſgreſſions; and we earneſtly beg, that they who complain we do not the good we ought, would at leaſt not hinder, but give us opportunity, and aſſiſt us rather to do both others and themſelves the good we would.

But even they, who proceed from complaints to endeavours of amending things, will fail unhappily of their end, if they truſt to worldly methods alone, and leave religion and virtue, the great ſupport and cement of human ſociety, out of their ſchemes. This will be merely palliating for a little while; and doing what the ſcripture, in perfect conformity with plain reaſon, hath long ago condemned, as doing nothing. *Becauſe they have ſeduced my people, ſaying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and others daubed it with untempered mortar: Therefore, thus ſaith the Lord God, I will rend it with a ſtormy wind, and bring it down to the ground, ſo that the foundations thereof ſhall be diſcovered; and it ſhall fall, and ye ſhall be conſumed in the midſt thereof, and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord* †. Indeed, every page of the prophetical writings recommends itſelf greatly to thinking perſons, by the moſt forcible and convincing expreſſions of the utter inefficacy of every expedient for public good, that is not accompanied with true virtue and true piety.

Theſe, therefore, it is our moſt important intereſt to reſtore and promote; to repreſent with earneſtneſs, and yet with mildneſs, to ſuch as are deficient in either, how wrong in itſelf, and how hurtful to the world, their conduct is; and to be zealous in doing our own duty, whether they will attend to theirs or not; perſons of rank and influence, by ſetting an example worthy of imitation, and ſhowing different regards to the good and the bad; perſons intruſted with public power,

* Mal. ii. 9. † Ezek. xiii. 10—14.

by behaving in their ſeveral ſtations uprightly; parents and maſters, by the prudent exerciſe of their private authority; and every one, at leaſt, by reforming himſelf. This, if it do nothing farther, will be ſecuring his own happineſs; and the more ſingle reformations there are, the nearer will be our approach to an univerſal one. We are called indeed perpetually to repentance; but the preſent national call, if it be not hearkened to, will much aggravate the guilt, not only of the profane deſpiſers of it, but thoſe alſo, whoſe compliance with it is merely external; who dare to approach the Searcher of hearts, and mock him by ſaying to him, without ſincerity, ſuch things as we have joined in ſaying this day.

On the times appointed for confeſſion of ſins, it hath always been a rule, as the word of God plainly ſhews, for perſons to abſtain in a conſiderable degree from their uſual food: not as thinking it a duty of any value in itſelf, for that were a ſuperſtitious imagination; and nothing can be more expreſs againſt every ſuperſtition, than ſcripture is; but partly to make an acknowledgment of more than ordinary ſolemnity, by their actions as well as words, of their unworthineſs to partake of the common bleſſings of heaven; and chiefly to ſpend thoſe hours in humility of ſpirit, and cool reflection for their future good, which they have ſpent too frequently in dangerous levities, or ſinful indulgences. It is not then the abſtinence, it is not the outward humiliation, nor even the real ſerioufneſs of a day, which God requires of us; but that theſe things be made ſubſervient to our laſting benefit: that preſerving on our minds the impreſſion of what we have ſaid and heard here, we go home and retire into ourſelves; think over our ſeveral duties, public and private, with reſpect to our Maker, our fellow-creatures, and the regulation of our own hearts; and after renewing our applications for pardon and grace, ſet right, without delay, whatever hath been wrong; that we form reſolutions to think often of our conduct, to follow ſteadily the moſt effectual methods for preſerving it ſuch as we ought, and not to ſuffer the opinions and cuſtoms of an inconſiderate world, to wear out of our minds the regard we owe to the author and end of our beings.

But beſides theſe obligations, there is yet another, which particularly deſerves our attention at this time; that when

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we aſk mercy of God, we ſhew it to man. And accordingly the ſcripture joins cloſely together faſting and giving alms; which therefore we ſhould join too, each according to his ability; but always remembering, that no one part of our duty whatever will be accepted as an equivalent for tranſgreſſing any other; but we muſt *break off our ſins by righteouſneſs*, as well as *our iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor* *, if ever we expect that our charity ſhould avail towards procuring our pardon.

And now would we but employ the preſent ſolemnity, in determining conſcientiouſly to practiſe theſe things; beſides the good fruits, it could not fail to produce in each of us ſingly; we might hope, on very juſt grounds, to experience nationally the ſame happy effects of it, which we read the *Jews* did, from making the ſame determination, upon hearing the admonition of the text. *They gathered themſelves together, and they entered into a covenant to ſeek the Lord God of their fathers. And they ſware unto him with a loud voice: And all Judah rejoiced at the oath. For they had ſworn with all their heart, and ſought him with their whole deſire, and he was found of them: And the Lord gave them reſt round about* †.

* Dan. iv. 27. † 2 Chron. xv. 10, 12, 14, 15.

SER-

SERMON CXVIII.

(Preached on a General Faſt.)

THE DUTY OF HUMILITY AT ALL TIMES, MORE ESPECIALLY ON OCCASIONS OF NATIONAL DISTRESS.

1 PET. v. 6,

Humble yourſelves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

HUMILITY of heart and behaviour is a duty, ſo deeply founded in the nature of man, that though we knew of no power above us, we ought yet to think modeſtly of ourſelves, from a conſciouſneſs of our infirmities; and pay a mutual deference one to another, in proportion to the different pre-eminences, be they ever ſo ſmall, by which we are ſeverally diſtinguiſhed. But the leaſt apprehenſion of a perfect being ſuperintending us, muſt ſurely magnify beyond expreſſion the ſenſe, how very imperfect we are; and convince us, that the utmoſt reverence, of which we are capable, towards ſuch a one, if ſuch a one there be, will fall vaſtly ſhort of what we owe. Now the exiſtence of a powerful and wiſe, a juſt and good, ruler of all, is, at firſt ſight, a poſſible thing. And were we ſure of no more, the notion is ſo reſpectable in itſelf, ſo beneficial to human ſociety, and ſo peculiarly comfortable to every honeſt mind, that paſſing it over with a ſcornful neglect, inſtead of attending to it ſeriouſly, would be haughtineſs of ſpirit, blameworthy and ſhocking to a great degree. But the reality of this notion is undeniably proved, by the plaineſt obſervations on every part of the univerſe, and the ſtricteſt inquiries into its general conſtitution; by the natural preposſeſſions of common men, the acuteſt reaſonings of ſpeculative

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men, and the moſt univerſal conſent that ever any inviſible truth obtained of all men. Yet farther, to leave no plea for ignorance of it or its conſequences, the Creator hath made himſelf known to his creatures by expreſs revelation; and declared what he is, what he expects from them, what he hath decreed concerning them. How monſtrous a diſpoſition of ſoul muſt it be then, that can pride itſelf in ſtanding out againſt ſuch evidence of ſuch a doctrine; can take upon it to cenſure the works of the Almighty, without underſtanding a ſingle part of them thoroughly; can triumph in the thought of an ungoverned and fatherleſs world, of wickedneſs unpuniſhed, and virtue unrewarded, and hold thoſe in utter contempt who entertain better hopes!

Our nation affords, I fear, more than a few perſons guilty even of ſuch pride againſt God as this. But it affords multitudes of a ſort, if poſſible, yet more unaccountable, who believe in him, and ſlight him. Acknowledging a Sovereign Lord of the world, without ſtanding in awe of him, is doubtleſs a moſt aſtoniſhing inconſiſtency; and yet I conceive it will appear, on inquiry, the main ſource of thoſe great and many ſins for which we are met here to expreſs our concern. Now, if this be our caſe, a little reflection will ſhew it to be a very dangerous one: and the apoſtle hath pointed out the only cure, that ſince, as the preceding verſe teaches, *God reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*, we ſhould *humble ourſelves* unfeignedly *under his mighty hand*, which hath been, and is, in ſeveral reſpects, heavy on us; that ſo, inſtead of depreſſing us lower ſtill, *he may exalt us* again *in due time*.

There are not many comparatively, but, in their cooler hours at leaſt, believe the Author of Nature to be alſo the wiſe and juſt Lawgiver and Ruler of mankind. Nay, lamentable as the apoſtacy of our days hath been, the generality ſtill entertain a perſuaſion, grounded on the firmeſt proofs, that he hath notified the conditions of eternal felicity by Jeſus Chriſt. But, having this *knowledge of God*, do they *glorify him as God* *? Do they pay any homage to him? Do they cultivate any regard for him? Do they conſider him as the Giver

* Rom. i. 21.

Giver of all Good, to whom their thanks are due for every thing they enjoy; as the Judge of the whole earth, who ſhall reward every one according to his works? Will they, in obedience to that reaſon which he hath beſtowed on them, reſiſt their vicious appetites and paſſions? Will they, on the authority of that revelation which he hath ſuperadded, receive any thing, but what they can ſee of themſelves to be true; or do any thing, but what they can ſee of themſelves to be requiſite? Is it not indeed their ſtated practice to ſet their own inclinations and fancies above all his aſſertions and laws; diſdaining to mind what is right or wrong, even when it relates to this life; and much more to be ſwayed by the tendencies, which doctrines or precepts may have, to fit them for the happineſs of another?

Nay, ſuch as imagine themſelves perhaps very ſteady believers, and ſufficiently good Chriſtians, do not many of them, though leſs profeſſedly, and without diſtinctly ſeeing it, yet almoſt as effectually, make their choice, juſt as they like, in what things their Chriſtianity ſhall conſiſt; and what they will go on to think or practiſe, however plainly forbidden in any one's judgment but their own. Are they at all willing to ſeek, with ſerious humility, what the goſpel teaches? Are they withheld from any ſin which it forbids, merely by the fear of their Lord and Maſter? Do they perform any duty which it enjoins, merely from love to their Redeemer? Try them but in one point. The ſacred writings have repeatedly directed a regular attendance on public worſhip and inſtruction: yet they neglect it perpetually, on pretences for which they would neglect ſcarce any one thing beſides: when they condeſcend to come, they would uſually be underſtood to do it as matter of prudence, or propriety, and compliance with cuſtom, but by no means of obedience to God. And, in general, they ſubſtitute the faſhions and uſages of what they call the world, that is, of the perſons with whom they deſire to pleaſe, in the place of the divine commands. This wretched rule they follow againſt their conſciences firſt; to this, by degrees, they bend their conſciences afterwards; and when once they have accompliſhed that, they will not reflect, they will not hearken, they will not bear the mention of an argument or hint to the contrary, but exclaim againſt it as abſurd,

ſurd, before it can well be brought out, let reaſon or ſcripture ſay what they will; till at laſt, not even yet renouncing their faith, they have hardly a ſingle good impreſſion from it left; no gratitude to God, no hope in him, no dread of him; no thought of themſelves in earneſt as his creatures; nor any recollection how profligate a treatment this is of our Maker, our Saviour, of the Holy Spirit of grace. We do not know, I believe, nor ſuſpect very often, how inconſiderable God is become in our eyes, and how near advances we have made to what is, in effect, mere atheiſm. But we have cheated ourſelves with diſguiſes, and ſhifted between religion and irreligion, till we have no perception whereabout we are. And it is high time for us to fix, once for all, which we will ſtand to. For if the Almighty deſerves any regard, he deſerves a moſt dutiful and univerſal one. Will we therefore pay him that, or will we avow paying him none?

But were many of us, whoſe appearance is more decent, to be examined, what there is in us beyond appearance; were many, who have ſome inward reſtraints and pious feelings, queſtioned how far they extend, and if there be not mixed with them a much leſs indeed, but ſtill a very criminal neglect and contempt of the Supreme Being, what do they think the reſult would be? Were ſuch to be aſked, how often they pray to him in private, or whether they remember perhaps when they did ſo laſt; with what attention they pray at ſuch times, or whether hurrying over a ſet of unmeaning words contents them; what care they take in his houſe, that their hearts join in the things they ſay, or improve by thoſe they hear; how often they meditate, as in the preſence of God, on their duty, and their condition with regard to another life; whether in truth they almoſt ever think of a future ſtate, as their principal concern, or have not inwardly choſen their portion here; whether they indulge no ſecret immorality, are chargerble with no injuſtice or unmercifulneſs; what expreſſion, or what tincture, there is in their common converſation and behaviour of a Chriſtian ſpirit; what zeal they have, what expences they are at, what methods they encourage, what pains they take for promoting the preſent and eternal welfare of their fellow-creatures; how muſt they anſwer? Nobody hath a right, it may be, to put ſuch queſtions

ſo you; but ſurely they are very important for you to put to yourſelves. And for God's ſake do it; and preſs your ſouls home to make an honeſt reply. For if religion be any thing, theſe are moſt material things. Do you then find, that you have hitherto been, in relation to them, ſuch perſons as you ought? And if not, do you experience a proportionable concern for your failures? Are you even now reſolved to become ſuch? And will you remember and keep to what you reſolve; or run away from your convictions to the firſt employment or amuſement you can hope to loſe them in, or however ſuffer them to wear out for want of being renewed; ſo, after a while, neglect your Maker and his laws as much as ever; and poſſibly deſpiſe yourſelves for having once, in a ſort of fright, thought to do otherwiſe? If you relapſe ſo far, your caſe will be a very dangerous, God grant it be not a deſperate one.

Yet amongſt all theſe blameable ſorts of perſons, there are many perhaps not ill diſpoſed, were they left to follow their own judgments quietly, towards becoming ſincerely and throughout religious: but the world would wonder at them, their acquaintance would ridicule them; and that they cannot bear. But which is your God then? The world, or the Maker of it? And which is it fitter you ſhould humble yourſelves under? The rightful authority of the greateſt and beſt of Beings, or the uſurped tyranny of a few vain mortals, whoſe friendſhip means you no good, and whoſe enmity can do you no harm? But ſo it is: we are cowardly one to another, and brave only againſt *him who hath power to caſt into hell* *.

Even the loweſt part of mankind, they alſo now have learnt from their ſuperiors to lift themſelves up in defiance of the Moſt High; to plead openly and boldly for gratifications, expreſsly prohibited by his commandments; to prefer their diverſions or their idleneſs before his worſhip; ſome of them to *ſit in*, and others to ſurround *the ſeat of the ſcorner* †. For poor wretches that know nothing elſe, imagine they know enough, however, to be above inſtruction in their duty, to contemn God's word, and ſcoff at his miniſters.

Such

* Luke xii. 5. † Pſal. i. 1.

Such is the condition, and I appeal to the obſervation of you all, alas! to the conſciences of too many of you, if it be not daily more and more, if it be not, I had almoſt ſaid, univerſally, the condition of the people of this land, eſpecially this city. *Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaſeth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men**.

But how great and general ſoever our tranſgreſſions have been, it will be alleged, that they cannot have ariſen from a principle ſo very ſhocking as pride, directed againſt the Author of our Beings, but from inconſiderate indulgence of leſs heinous, though ſtill blame-worthy diſpoſitions. But were there, and O that there were! much more room for this plea than there is, yet bare inconſiderateneſs and forgetfulneſs of God is, in no ſmall degree, contempt of him. However, ſome offenders have not adventured on ſo direct impiety as others. And we ought to judge, with all poſſible tenderneſs, of every one's caſe beſides our own; but it concerns us, beyond expreſſion, not to flatter ourſelves in that. And we may diſcern, with certainty, the true ſtate of it by this one mark. If want of thought hath occaſioned ill behaviour, we ſhall be thankful for admonition, and readily change our courſe; if pride, we ſhall be diſpleaſed with it, and tempted to go on. But whether we have diſobeyed God wilfully or inadvertently, we have great cauſe to humble ourſelves before him with deep contrition, and bewail our own perſonal guilt in the firſt place, then the ſins of thoſe who make up the ſame community with us; for he cannot correct them, but we muſt ſuffer at the ſame time.

Now, ſuppoſing we did not at all feel ourſelves particularly under his mighty hand at preſent, yet ſurely we ought to recollect with great awe, that in reality we are under it always. His government of the world is without ceaſing carried on, however ſilently, yet ſteadily and powerfully, to that one end, which a Being of perfect holineſs muſt propoſe to himſelf ultimately, the manifeſtation of his glory, in the puniſhment of the wicked, and reward of the good. Were both to be entirely deferred till after death, as the chief part of both will, yet how near is that to us all; and how very near

* Pſal. xii. 1.

to many of us, who perhaps are the fartheſt of any from ſuſpecting it! Though, were it as diſtant as it can, yet the connection of it with eternal enjoyments or ſufferings being as certain as that God is holy and true, the practical inference would be juſt the ſame as if it were overtaking us this very moment. But indeed, unleſs we will abſolutely ſhut our eyes, we muſt ſee judgments from above, both naturally flowing from our ſins, and additionally inflicted on them in the mean while.

All wickedneſs, by the righteous and wiſe appointment of Providence, in the ordinary courſe of things, produces miſery: and the great reſtraint from all wickedneſs is the fear of God. While men continue to reverence him, there will always be ſome hold upon them, to keep them back from committing evil, or bring them back to repent of it. But when once that band is broken, which it is of late in this nation, beyond any other in the Chriſtian, or perhaps the Heathen world, ſlighter and weaker ties will ſoon give way one after another, till by degrees every thing is ſet looſe. And how very faſt accordingly our morals and our prudence have been forſaking us, ever ſince we have begun to forſake religion, and to find out that our Maker is unworthy of our notice, a little reflection will ſhew us too plainly, if indeed any be needful. Do we not ſee probity and integrity, friendlineſs and natural affection, viſibly decayed? Perſons of all ranks living above their ranks; and firſt diſtreſſing themſelves and their families by vain and vicious expences, then deſcending to every baſeneſs that will enable them to proceed in this wrong way, and every folly that will drive away remorſe for an hour, though by furniſhing cauſe for its return with more bitterneſs than ever; crowding their whole time with abſurd and dangerous diverſions, and infected with a rage for pleaſure and ſhew, be the conſequences what they will; that hath taken poſſeſſion of high and low, young and old, to a degree unknown before; and in many fears not, in ſome affects, to diſplay itſelf, on the days ſet apart for the worſhip of God, nay for ſolemn penitence and humiliation? Do we not ſee almoſt every body treating the groſſeſt and moſt pernicious immoralities, of what they gently ſtile the gay kind, as no faults at all in one ſex, and daily approaching nearer towards af-

fording them open countenance in the other: making, on any occaſion indeed, very little diſtinction, though it be of unſpeakable importance to make a great one, between good people and bad; or, to ſay the truth, rather inverting than laying claim to the pſalmiſt's character: *In whoſe eyes a vile perſon is contemned; but he honoureth them, that fear the Lord* *. Do we not ſee them educating their children, and managing their ſervants, as if it were on purpoſe to have them wicked; plainly perceiving them to be miſerable in conſequence of it; perpetually involved themſelves in grievous uneaſineſſes and difficulties from it, and making frequently heavy complaints of it; yet never once reflecting to purpoſe, whence it comes, or what would mend it; but ſtupidly acquieſcing in what they have the neareſt concern to prevent; and taking it for granted, that ſuch of neceſſity is to be the condition of their families, from one generation to another?

And if theſe fruits have ſprung in private life from our diſdain of piety, what muſt it have produced in public? Juſt what we were to expect from a number of ſuch creatures put together; and from the fixed decree of providence, that *they, who plough iniquity, and ſow wickedneſs, ſhall reap the ſame* †. Rulers and magiſtrates, having permitted the authority that ordained them to ſink, have, by a conſequence which they might eaſily have foreſeen, loſt their own: Reſpect to every kind of ſuperiors is worn out; and next to the laws of heaven, thoſe of our country are regarded leaſt. The nature of things, and the word of God, have made uprightneſs and induſtry the ſupports of ſociety, and religion the ſupport of them. But we have imagined we could do better than this: we have been laying other foundations, and bringing theſe into utter diſeſteem, as it were by conſent on all ſides, till they, who deſire moſt to act upon principle, find, it may be feared, ſcarce any remainder of principle among us left to act upon. We have *truſted in the ſtaff of a broken reed, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it* ‡. *We have forſaken God, the fountain of living waters, and hewed us out broken ciſterns, that can hold no water* §. We have indeed been worſe

* Pſ. xv. 4.
† Job iv. 8.
‡ Iſ. xxxvi. 6.
§ Jer. ii. 13.

worſe than negligent, we have been jealous of religion; fearful that bigotry, enthuſiaſm, ſuperſtition, and all manner of evils would flow from it; and ſo, without taking the leaſt care to guard againſt them, or prevent the increaſe of that communion, in which they are moſt intimately mixed with it, piety in general hath been made the ſubject of invective and deriſion, till we are at preſent immerſed in profaneneſs and profligateneſs: and, as extremes beget one another, directly in the road to be over-run after a while by Popery, the ſchools of which are multiplying continually in our ſtreets. We have thought the morals of our people totally undeſerving of regard, unleſs it were to corrupt them, that we might enjoy *the public benefits of private vices*: and the conſequence hath been, to ſay of others no more than hath been ſaid, that our poor, the ſtrength and riches of a nation when regulated well, ate every-where deſtroying themſelves and their poſterity by their intemperance and promiſcuous lewdneſs; and becoming, in the mean time, an inſupportable burthen by their idleneſs and extravagance. We have thought that neither God nor man were to reſtrain whatever we pleaſe to call liberty; and thus we have plunged into a licentiouſneſs, that hath brought upon us many of the inconveniencies, and almoſt all the diſcontent, of ſlavery.

Nor hath the Almighty omitted to ſuperadd, though with a gentle hand, corrections entirely his own, to the ſufferings, which we have choſen to inflict on ourſelves, by means of the ſtated connections, which he hath wiſely and juſtly eſtabliſhed. We had long been poſſeſſed of the bleſſing of peace, without making any one good uſe of it: and he hath permitted a war to come upon us, of which we foreſee neither the duration nor the event. We had long enjoyed healthy and plentiful ſeaſons, without acknowledging Him for the giver of them: and we have ſince been viſited with ſickneſs in all our borders; and ſuch dearth as few, if any of us, ever knew before. *Our heavens have been made as braſs, and our earth as iron**; and we would not underſtand it to be a chaſtiſement: *the former and the latter rain*† have been reſtored to us, and we have not owned it to be a mercy. Now, if lighter and ſhorter judgments

* Deut. xxviii. 23. † Deut. xi. 14. Jer. v. 24.

ments will not awaken us, heavier and longer muſt. For ſo the prophet foretells: *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not ſee; but they ſhall ſee* *. And how much greater evils God may yet cauſe us to ſee, lies hid in the treaſures of his own foreknowledge. We are at preſent in a condition, that may, in various reſpects, very naturally and very ſoon become extremely dreadful. And what elſe we can do to better our proſpect, is neither eaſy for any perſon to diſcover, nor indeed the concern of every perſon to inquire; but there is one thing, which alone of itſelf will do incredible good; and every thing beſides, very little without it; which we all have in our power, and all feel to be our duty. *Come, and let us return unto the Lord our God; for he hath torn, and he will heal us: He hath ſmitten, and he will bind us up* †.

Both particulars and nations, which fall into a bad way, are ſtrangely unwilling, for the moſt part, to underſtand the truth of their own caſe. Such was the diſpoſition of God's ancient people, admirably deſcribed by the prophet *Hoſea: His ſtrength is devoured, and he knoweth it not: yea, grey hairs are upon him, and he knoweth it not. And the pride of Iſrael teſtifieth to his face: and they do not return to the Lord, nor ſeek him, for all this* ‡. Nay, when the diſeaſe is much too notorious to be denied, perſons will be aſcribing it to other cauſes, and inventing other cures, than the right one; putting confidence in ſchemes unconnected with reformation, and perhaps mending bad with worſe. But to theſe the Almighty himſelf hath expreſsly denounced: *Woe to the rebellious children, ſaith the Lord, that take counſel, but not of me; that cover with a covering, but not of my ſpirit; that they may add ſin to ſin: that will not hear the law of the Lord; which ſay, cauſe the Holy One of Iſrael to ceaſe from before us. Wherefore, thus ſaith the Holy One of Iſrael, Becauſe ye deſpiſe this word, therefore this iniquity ſhall be to you as a breach ready to fall, ſwelling out in a high wall, whoſe breaking cometh ſuddenly at an inſtant* §. Healing ſores in a palliative unſound manner, only occaſions their burſting out again with

* Iſ. xxvi. 11.
† Hoſ. vi. 1.
‡ Hoſ. vii. 9, 10.
§ Iſ. xxx. 1—13.

with more threatening ſymptoms. If therefore we would truly mend our caſe, we muſt go to the bottom of it. We have been wicked, and we muſt repent. We have deſpiſed God, and we muſt *humble ourſelves under his mighty hand.*

But then what ſhall we reckon is doing ſo? Is it merely appointing or obſerving a form of humiliation for form's ſake? Inſtead of appeaſing God, we ſhall not ſo much as deceive men by this; but only veil irreligion with tranſparent hypocriſy. Is it then being affected and warmed a little, at the time, by what we ſay or hear in this place, and becoming, almoſt immediately after, juſt the ſame perſons that we were before! On the contrary, theſe tranſient fits of piety are mentioned in ſcripture, as a very diſcouraging ſign: *O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? O Judah, what ſhall I do unto thee? For your goodneſs is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away* *. While perſons reflect not at all, one knows not how it may operate, if ever they come to reflect. But when, through the grace of God, they have actually been made ſenſible of their guilt and their danger, and yet relapſe into it; when their convictions have been renewed, their good purpoſes repeated, and yet all ſuffered, time after time, to fall back into nothing, what can be expected, but that heaven will at laſt abandon thoſe, who, in ſo ſhameful a manner, abandon themſelves? Our preſent buſineſs therefore is, each of us to imprint on our minds now ſuch deep ſentiments, as may influence us ever after, that devoutly conforming our lives and our ſouls to the will of God, is the very end of our being: to recollect and confeſs before him, how grievouſly and how long both we in particular, and this nation in general, have neglected the obedience we owe him: to acknowledge, that we are altogether in his hands, as private perſons and as a people: to conſider whatever hath befallen us, as leſs than our iniquities have merited: to prepare ourſelves, with meek reſignation, for whatever more he may pleaſe to inflict on us: yet earneſtly petition him, that whatever becomes of our temporal concerns, *our ſpirits may be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus* †; and that if it be conſiſtent

* Hoſ. vi. 4. † 1 Cor. v 5.

ent with his holineſs and wiſdom, he would ſpare us even in this world, *not for our righteouſneſs, but his own great mercies**, in Chriſt our Redeemer, for the honour of his name, and the preſervation of his true religion eſtabliſhed amongſt us; to form ſolemn reſolutions againſt every ſin, againſt every occaſion of ſin, for the future: begging at the ſame time that grace of our Sanctifier, which alone can make them effectual; and do all theſe things not only in profeſſion, as matter of outward decency, but from the bottom of our ſouls; not only with a ſudden fervor, excited here in the congregation, but deliberately at home, before *our Father which ſeeth in ſecret*†.

How eaſy, or how hard, it may be for any of us to bring our hearts really into ſuch a frame as this, he only knows, who knows all things. Perhaps it is a ſort of language, and a way of thinking, to which ſome of us have never been uſed, and which others have long diſuſed. If it be, we have ſo much the more need to take it up without delay. For our Maker and our Judge is entitled to the moſt lowly ſubmiſſions from his guilty creatures; and there is neither any meanneſs in making, nor any greatneſs in refuſing, them. In all caſes, the juſt and the right is the worthy and the honourable behaviour. But in this, above all, it is the neceſſary one too. Obſtinacy cannot ſupport us; diſſimulation will not conceal us; it is God we are concerned with, and our only reſource is to throw ourſelves on his mercy. The very beſt of us have cauſe to lament our failings, to reiterate our vows, to implore his forgiveneſs and aſſiſtance, yet more ardently than we have done. In proportion to our tranſgreſſions and deficiencies, our ſelf-abaſement, our penitence, our ſupplications, our efforts of amendment, ought to increaſe. And that our performance of theſe obligations will be followed, bad as our ſtate is, with the happieſt conſequences, reaſon affords comfortable hope, the whole tenor of ſcripture expreſsly declares, and the text with peculiar ſtrength implies, *humble yourſelves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

* Dan. ix. 18. † Matth. vi. 6.

But I must not now enter on the illustration and proof of this important connection. May our present humiliation give an experimental proof of it, by effectually inclining us to *be reconciled to God* *, and inducing him to direct our public counsels into the way of national prosperity, and our private conduct into that of eternal blessedness.

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

SER-

SERMON CXIX.

(Preached on a General Faſt.)

THE DUTY OF HUMILITY AT ALL TIMES, MORE ESPECIALLY ON OCCASIONS OF NATIONAL DISTRESS.

1 PET. v. 6.

Humble yourſelves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

AT our laſt meeting on the ſame moſt neceſſary occaſion which calls us together now, I endeavoured to lay before you, from theſe words, both the general duty of man's *walking humbly with his God* *, and the particular reaſons, which we of this nation have, for exerciſing a very deep humility towards him, as we have been particularly guilty, beſides various other ſins, of that unſpeakable ſhocking one, pride againſt him. Too many amongſt us have dared to treat the faith, if not of his being, yet of the only thing which makes it valuable, a juſt and good providence, with utter contempt; abſurd as it is, that the wiſe and powerful Maker of the world ſhould not be the Ruler of it, and that the Ruler of the world ſhould not *reward every one according to his works* †. Much greater numbers, if they do not deny his moral government, yet almoſt entirely diſregard it; attend on his public worſhip but ſeldom, and then viſibly as matter of mere external decency; never condeſcend to pay him any homage in private; nor through their whole behaviour conſider him, in the leaſt, as what they profeſs to acknowledge he is, the Lawgiver, the Inſpector and Judge of their lives

* Mic. vi. 8. † Matth. xvi. 27.

and hearts; but ſecurely follow paſſion, appetite, cuſtom, fancy, as the guide of their conduct; and openly ridicule thoſe that do otherwiſe; call themſelves Chriſtians perhaps; but are totally void of reverence for every doctrine of Chriſtianity that is above their comprehenſion, for every precept that contradicts their inclination, and ſtrangely negligent even of natural piety and ſocial virtue. Larger multitudes yet imagine, that they are mighty religious perſons, if they preſerve but a tolerable regularity in the outward acts of devotion, juſtice and temperance, though not proceeding from any inward principle of love and duty to God; not accompanied by any ſenſe of their needing his pardon through the bleſſed Jeſus, or his help through the influences of the Holy Spirit; not carried on to an uniform habit either of obedience or reſignation, or animated by the hopes of a better world. Indeed they moſt commonly live, and often die, as unconcerned about his future diſpoſal of them, as if it were not a matter of moment at all, inſtead of being the only real one that belongs to our condition.

But, if poſſible, we have ſlighted him ſtill more, conſidered as a people, than ſeparately. We have enjoyed the greateſt national bleſſings, without the leaſt national thankfulneſs for them. In particular, he hath bleſſed us with the cleareſt knowledge of the ſeveral obligations incumbent on us; and we have ſhewn the moſt abſolute ſcorn of all methods for promoting or ſecuring the practice of them, even in thoſe points on which our public welfare moſt confeſſedly depends. Nor have we hitherto received the warnings, or even the corrections of the Almighty, which have begun to overtake us, with more reſpect than his mercies. You have juſt heard the caſe of the barren fig-tree read in the goſpel for the day: *Behold, theſe three years I come ſeeking fruit, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground* *? Brethren, what is our caſe? The preſent is the fifth year that we have profeſſed to obſerve a ſolemn faſt, on account of our ſins and our dangers, without making the leaſt reformation in any ſingle article. Nay, we have continually increaſed in neglect of religion, in gaiety and madneſs for pleaſure, till we are come

to

* Luke xiii. 7.

to purſue our diverſions openly on the moſt ſacred day of the week; and ſome (for in every inſtance, while the offence is renewed, the complaint muſt) cannot perſuade themſelves to abſtain from them, or from inviting large companies of others to join in them, even on theſe anniverſaries of peculiar humiliation.

Such outrages on piety and common decency as theſe, muſt, when repeated after notice taken of them, and warning given againſt them, which hath been faithfully done by the miniſters of God's word, be deemed premeditated inſults, not inadvertence and forgetfulneſs. Yet forgetfulneſs of the Moſt High can never be a ſlight offence: and is greatly aggravated by the ſtrong admonitions to remember him, which not only his holy word and our conſciences, would we hearken to them, give us perpetually, but his providence alſo hath given us of late. The natural conſequences and ſuperadded puniſhments of our diſregard to him, have appeared very plainly for ſome time, and are daily becoming more viſible and ſenſible, in the ſins, and follies, and diſtreſſes of private life, in the general want of public order and public ſpirit in burdens and uneaſineſſes; in threatnings and actual attempts from abroad to deprive us of the liberty we have abuſed, and the religion we have ſcorned; and ſink us down into the ſlavery, and ſuperſtition, and wretchedneſs, that we have deſerved to feel. Hitherto, indeed, the ſtorm hath not fallen upon us; but it ſtill hangs over us more heavily than moſt of us have ever known: our efforts to diſpel it have ſucceeded very imperfectly; the difficulty of renewing thoſe efforts muſt be augmenting each year; our enemies are multiplied in a dreadful manner; and what aſſiſtance we may expect from our friends, God only knows. One thing, indeed, may afford ſome conſolation to us. We have manifeſted, on occaſion of our danger, an univerſal zeal for that eſtabliſhment which is the only human means of preſerving us from it. Had we failed in our loyalty, we had completed our wickedneſs: and ſhould any temptation hereafter entice or provoke us to fail in it, we and our poſterity are entirely undone. But there can be no ſure dependence on their dutifulneſs to their king, who are undutiful to their God; or on their attachment to the common intereſt of the ſociety, who prefer every preſent

gratification to their own everlaſting welfare. Or if there could, a profane and wicked people will never have equal ſpirit in defence of the community, for they have not equal motives to it, with a pious and virtuous one. Or ſuppoſing their courage ever ſo great; their wealth, their ſtrength, their union, their aſſiduity, their obſervance of rules, their mutual confidence, will be leſs; and thoſe vices, which have brought us already ſo far on our way towards ruin, muſt at length, if we perſiſt in them, bring us to it, merely by producing their natural effects.

But could we have hopes of eſcaping theſe, the honour of the divine government is concerned not to let a national contempt of it go unpuniſhed, even in this world; and all reliance on human wiſdom and power, without regard to God, will prove in the end fatal ſelf-deceit. *When the Lord ſhall ſtretch out his hand, both he that helpeth ſhall ſtumble, and he that is holpen ſhall fall down: they ſhall all fail together* *. *The anger of the Lord ſhall not return, till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye ſhall conſider it perfectly* †.

But ſurely then we had much better conſider it *in this our day* ‡: and, as another text awfully exhorts, *give glory to the Lord our God, before he cauſe darkneſs; and while we look for light, he turn it into the ſhadow of death* §. Too many, of all ranks, will probably ſlight whatever of this kind is ſaid, even from ſcripture itſelf. But ſtill our commiſſion is: *Son of man, I ſend thee to the children of Iſrael; to a rebellious nation, that hath rebelled againſt me, they and their fathers unto this very day: and thou ſhalt ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord; and thou ſhalt ſpeak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear* ‖. Men in power and high ſtations more eſpecially, and they who aſpire to them no leſs, have always been diſpoſed to look with great diſdain on the artleſs and unwelcome directions, which religion ſuggeſts for deliverance from danger. They have more refined contrivances, on which they reſt; and ſcorn the plain methods of reconciliation to God, and truſt in him, through our bleſſed Redeemer,

* Ma. xxxi. 3. † Jer. xxiii, 20 ‡ Luke xix. 42.
§ Jer. xiii. 16. ‖ Ezek. ii. 3, 4, 7.

Redeemer, as fitted only for the populace to hearken to. But the ſcripture hath provided an alarming denunciation againſt them in particular. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye ſcornful men, that rule this people which is in Jeruſalem. Becauſe ye have ſaid, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falſehood have we hid ourſelves: Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation ſtone, a tried ſtone, a precious corner ſtone, a ſure foundation: he that believeth ſhall not make haſte*. Judgment alſo will I lay to the line, and righteouſneſs to the plummet; and the hail ſhall ſweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters ſhall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death ſhall be diſannulled, and your agreement with hell ſhall not ſtand. Now therefore be ye not mockers, leſt your bands be made ſtrong* †. Another ſort of perſons, extremely apt to deſpiſe the thought of reformation, indeed all ſerious thought whatever, are they who abandon themſelves to indolence and voluptuouſneſs, and the ſtudy of luxurious elegance and delicacy. But for theſe likewiſe, there is, in the treaſury of the prophets, a menace in ſtore, which contains, alas! much too exact a deſcription of our own times. *Woe unto them, that are at eaſe in Zion, that put far away the evil day, that lie upon beds of ivory, and ſtretch themſelves upon their couches, that eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midſt of the ſtall* (the luxury of the table had then made but a ſmall progreſs), *that chant to the ſound of the viol, and invent to themſelves inſtruments of muſic, that drink wine in bowls, and perfume themſelves with the chief perfumes* ‡, *but are not grieved for the affliction of Joſeph. Therefore now ſhall they go captive with the firſt that go captive, and their banquet ſhall be removed* §. Others again are by no means indifferent about the ſtorm which they ſee gathering; but have no belief, that amendment, or any thing, can diſperſe it; and therefore will take

* Or, be aſhamed. See Rom. ix. 33. x. 11. † Iſa. xxviii. 14—18, 22.

‡ In our tranſlation it is, anoint themſelves with the chief ointments. But this, though literal, gives a different idea now from what it did then.

§ Amos vi. 1, 3—7.

take no pains in what they conceive will produce no good. But at leaſt to themſelves amendment will produce the greateſt good: and reſolutions not to amend, will bring, both upon them and others, more certain and ſpeedy, and total deſtruction; which elſe, after all, may perhaps be avoided. For hear the declaration of God in this caſe. *Now therefore ſpeak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, ſaying: Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, I frame evil againſt you; return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. And they ſaid, There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord, Aſk ye now among the Heathen, who hath heard ſuch things. I will ſcatter them, as with an eaſt wind, before the enemy: I will ſhew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity* *.

So that, whether it be confidence or deſpair, that hinders reformation, the threatenings you ſee are the ſame. And the full execution of theſe threatenings, together with the cauſe of it, is thus recorded in the book of Chronicles. *The Lord God of their fathers ſent to them by his meſſengers, becauſe he had compaſſion on his people, and on his dwelling-place. But they mocked the meſſengers of God, and deſpiſed his words, and miſuſed his prophets, until the wrath of God aroſe againſt his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who ſlew their young men with the ſword in the houſe of their ſanctuary, and had no compaſſion upon young or old: he gave them all into his hand* †.

How near we have approached to them in our guilt is too viſible: how eaſily we may come to reſemble them in our puniſhment is not leſs ſo. The hand of God is plainly lifted up over us: the only queſtion is, Will we *humble ourſelves under it*, or will we not? Will we yet acknowledge, that he is the Sovereign of the world, and obeying him the only way to proſper? Will we yet *ſeek him, while he may be found* ‡; confeſs our ſins, change our conduct, and petition for his mercy? There have been circumſtances, in which repentance itſelf would not ſtop the courſe of temporal puniſhments, though

* Jer. xviii. 11, 12, 13, 17. † 2 Chr. xxxvi. 15, 16, 17. ‡ Iſa. lv. 6.

though it will always prevent eternal ones: in which God hath ſaid to his prophets, *Pray not for this people for their good. When they faſt, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will conſume them by the ſword, and by the famine, and by the peſtilence**. Even to this extremity we may reduce ourſelves: but that we are already in it, no way appears. The general rule of his providence is, *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: if that nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them*†. And it ought to be our perſuaſion, that we are within the rule. Our cauſe is unqueſtionably good; and though we have been, moſt of us, lamentably wicked, yet through his grace many have preſerved their integrity: and either for their ſake, or his mercies ſake, we ſtill enjoy great bleſſings. He hath been far from forſaking us, to the degree that we have forſaken him: elſe our ſtate were wretched indeed: and would we but now *humble ourſelves* thoroughly *under his mighty hand*, there is no room to doubt, but *he would exalt us in due time.*

Whenever he calls upon us to uſe the inſtrument, he ſurely deſigns us to attain the end for which it was formed. Now penitent reformation is the natural as well as the appointed inſtrument for exalting both particular perſons and communities. Religion works indeed by terror at firſt, and lowers the high ſpirits of the guilty; but only to raiſe them again on ſolid grounds, inſtead of the treacherous props which kept them up before. Without it, there is no dignity in the condition of man: and how ſhould there be any expected in his deportment? If perſons either believe not in one, who ſees and rewards, or cannot hope that he will reward good to them; if all that they promiſe themſelves be here, and they apprehend, that neither annihilation or miſery awaits them hereafter; they will of courſe be many of them dangerous and miſchievous, the generality of them, baſe and vile, attend ſolely to the indulgence of their fancies and their ſenſes, *eat and drink, for to-morrow they die*‡. Or if any ſparks of worth

* Jer. xiv. 11, 13. † Jer. xviii. 7, 8. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 32.

do remain, unextinguiſhed by ſuch a mean way of thinking, they will have only an occaſional and partial influence. Or could it, in ſome few, be a conſtant and uniform one, yet they will be very few: and the body of a people, if they are without conſcience towards God, will be without honour and probity towards men; without prudence and magnanimity in the conduct of themſelves; profligate and deſpicable in all reſpects. But on the contrary, true religion, for I ſpeak not of ſuperſtitious perſuaſions and obſervances, true religion places men above ſordid intereſts, low pleaſures, and worldly anxieties; teaches them to dread nothing but offending their Maker; to ſet their hearts on nothing but pleaſing him; and to have no conception of pleaſing him by any other means than rational piety and genuine virtue; it excites them, by the nobleſt of motives, to whatever is uſeful and eſtimable, and reſtrains them, by the ſtrongeſt terrors, from whatever is bad and hurtful; obliges them to right behaviour in the higheſt proſperity, and ſupports them in it under the heavieſt adverſities; inſpires men with the moſt earneſt concern for doing their duty; and frees them from all concern about the conſequences of it in this world, by preſenting to their view the endleſs recompences of a better. Such, in ſome degree, is the influence even of natural religion; but unſpeakably more powerful will that be found, *whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promiſes, that by theſe we might be partakers of the divine nature* *.

Then farther, the ſentiments which thus dignify every one's behaviour ſingly, muſt have the ſame influence upon all, conſidered as forming a community. Public welfare will never be conſulted as it ought, while men act merely on ſeparate ſelfiſh bottoms; nor ever fail to be conſulted, when a well-founded faith in God animates their zeal for general good. Slights and provocations, difficulties and riſks, private advantages, and party or perſonal attachments, may very eaſily ſway and bias all that act from temporal motives; but are nothing to ſuch as act from this, the only one that cannot poſſibly be at any time overbalanced. So long as the ſtate of affairs is calm indeed, government may go on very ſmoothly,

* 2 Pet. i. 4.

ly, without much principle in thoſe who are employed by it, or live under it; perhaps the more ſmoothly for a while, in ſome caſes, the leſs principle there is. But when ſtorms riſe, as after ſuch calms they will riſe, then is the time to ſee in what the real ſtrength of ſociety conſiſts; who will ſtruggle, who will hazard, who will be faithful to the laſt. They that fear God certainly will: and we can have no certainty (how ſhould we?) of any other. Amongſt the truly religious, becauſe they are ſuch, there will be ſecure and mutual truſt, faithful economy, and unwearied application; their counſels will be ſteady, their undertakings juſt, their execution bold, their confidence in Heaven ſtrong, and their adherence to a righteous cauſe unmoveable! Seldom, if ever, will a ſtate, which proceeds in this manner, fail of ſucceſs. And were they to fail ever ſo greatly, nay, to be overwhelmed ever ſo entirely, they would fall with more reputation and more happineſs than others flouriſh. But there is always reaſon for better hopes. A nation, reverencing the Sovereign of the Univerſe, will be reverenced by all around them, as *a wiſe and underſtanding people, which hath the Lord nigh unto them* *. Their friends will know they can depend on them; their enemies will know they have the utmoſt efforts to fear from them; both will know, and they themſelves too, that even in their laſt extremity Providence may be expected to fight for them. *Great are the troubles of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. The Lord delivereth the ſouls of his ſervants: and they, that put their truſt in him, ſhall not be deſtitute* †.

But then it muſt be obſerved, that ſuch as have long been ſinners, and are at laſt become penitent (the former is certainly our caſe, would to God the latter were!) if relief doth not appear immediately, ought to wait for it with much patience, and be well ſatisfied if they are *exalted in due time*: in God's time, not their own. Wickedneſs ruins nations by degrees, reformation may reſtore them by degrees. An imperfect reformation will be likely to bring forth but imperfect fruits. And the completeſt reformation of a few may prove inſufficient to ſave the whole. Still theſe are reaſons

* Deut. iv. 6, 7. † Pſal. xxiv. 20, 22.

only why all ſhould repent; not why none ſhould, unleſs all will; which it is impoſſible to foreſee. For, be the generality ever ſo incorrigible, and their deſtruction ever ſo abſolutely decreed on that account, there is encouragement enough notwithſtanding, for thoſe who do humble themſelves, and return to a better mind. *Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment. It may be ye ſhall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger* *. At leaſt, whatever ſuch may ſuffer in common with others, far from being a mark of his anger towards them, will contribute largely to improve their virtues, and increaſe their future reward. So that in every event they may *caſt all their care on God, for he careth for them* †. Undoubtedly they will feel the uneaſineſs which human nature muſt from whatever is painful to it; and, in particular, a tender concern for multitudes who have none for themſelves. But ſtill they will ſubmit, with compoſedneſs and reverent approbation, to the ſevereſt ſentences of Heaven; and reflect with joy, that their chief intereſt is ſafe, though inferior comforts be loſt.

Let us therefore *acquaint ourſelves with God, and be at peace* ‡: *For he will keep thoſe in perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on him* §. Whoever they are, that, ſenſible of their offences and their weakneſs, apply for the pardon obtained by Jeſus Chriſt, and the grace communicated by the Holy Spirit; who, in their private capacity, honour God, ſtudy to be harmleſs and uſeful amongſt men, and govern themſelves by the rules of virtue; who alſo, in their public capacity, earneſtly *pray for* and impartially ſeek the *peace of Jeruſalem* ‖, the welfare of their country, civil and religious; not led by intereſt, reſentment, or vanity, but having at heart real common good: and who, in their whole conduct, encourage and reſtrain themſelves, as the caſe requires, by the faith of a future recompence: whatever may befall the ſociety of which they are part, it ſhall be well with them. Whatever elſe they may undergo, others will have nothing to reproach them with; they will have nothing to reproach their own ſouls with; and *in the darkneſs light ſhall ariſe unto*

* Zeph. ii. 3. † 1 Pet. v. 7. ‡ Job xxii. 21.
§ Iſ. xxvi. 3. ‖ Pſal. cxxii. 6.

*to them**. All ſuch perſons, therefore, after doing conſcientiouſly what is incumbent on them, not only may, but ought to be without ſolicitude; and ſhould let the foundation of their peace be known, that all around them may perceive how vaſtly preferable the conſolations of religion are to every other method of making themſelves eaſy. The pious man doth not labour to quiet his thoughts, by obſtinately ſhutting his eyes, or plunging into exceſſes, or taking off his attention by amuſements; but can with tranquillity look towards the evil day, and ſee it coming; wait for it, and bear his ſhare of it, leſs or greater; being aſſured, that *all things work together for his good* †. A very different ſtate from theirs, who know they have deſerved the judgments of God; who know they have contributed to bring them down on their own and others heads; who have nothing to cheer them, when the clouds gather on every ſide of them; nothing to direct them, when the blackeſt tempeſt pours upon them, but the momentary glimmerings of human hope, ſtruck out by their own imaginations; and if they ſhould eſcape, if they ſhould outwardly proſper again for the preſent, will only be tempted by it to *treaſure up to themſelves* hotter *wrath againſt the day of wrath* ‡ and final judgment. But hear, I entreat you, how the word of God expreſſes the caſe of each: and may its enlivening exhortation to the former, and its terrifying admonition to the latter, ſink deep into your breaſts. *Who is among you, fearing the Lord, that walketh in darkneſs, and hath no light? Let him truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, and compaſs yourſelves about with ſparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the ſparks which you have kindled: this ſhall ye have of mine hand, ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow* §.

* Pſal. cxii. 4. † Rom. viii. 28. ‡ Rom. ii. 5. § Iſa. l. 10, 11.

SERMON CXX.

(Preached on occaſion of the Rebellion in *Scotland* in 1745.)

TRUST IN GOD, AND EXERTION OF COURAGE, OUR DUTY IN TIMES OF NATIONAL DANGER.

2 SAM. X. 12.

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.

MANY of you, I hope, remember, that I diſcourſed to you upon theſe words a year and ſeven months ago*; when God, for our ſins, threatened us firſt, with what, for the continuance of them, he hath at length permitted to fall on part of this land. The renewal, and nearer approach, of the ſame danger, requires a more earneſt inculcating of the ſame exhortations. For perhaps we may now lay to heart the things we did not then. It is very true, the pulpit ought never to be prophaned, and I truſt never hath been, or ſhall by me, to ſerve the purpoſes of party-intereſt; or intermeddle with any points of a political nature, about which the friends of their country, that think at all, can poſſibly be of different opinions. But the preſent is a common cauſe, affecting every one of us, without diſtinction, in what is moſt important to us; and God forbid, that the miniſters of the goſpel ſhould be either unwilling or affraid to ſpeak, when his providence calls to them ſo loudly, to lift up their voice. Should the ſtorm, which is now beating on many of our fellow-ſubjects, be diſperſed by infinite

* *February* 26. 1743-4.

infinite goodneſs ever ſo ſoon and ſo entirely, without reaching us; it may yet be of unſpeakable uſe, to have made the proper reflections and reſolutions, whilſt it was approaching towards us. And ſhould the Almighty ſuffer us to feel it, as we have well deſerved, nothing, but thinking and behaving rightly under his judgments, can give us hope of his mercy to moderate and ſhorten them.

Now whatever is requiſite for theſe ends, is clearly comprehended in the words of the text; which bring naturally to our thoughts the three following particulars.

I. The intereſts we have at ſtake. *Our people, and the cities of our God.*

II. The ſpirit which we ought to ſhew in defending them. *Be of good courage, and let us play the men.*

III. The humble dependance on heaven, which we ought to exerciſe at the ſame time. *And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.*

I. The intereſts we have at ſtake. *Our people and the cities of our God*: in other words, our civil rights and our religion.

The defence of their perſons and poſſeſſions againſt lawleſs power, and the ſecure enjoyment of the means of happineſs here and hereafter, were the great motives, that induced men to ſubmit originally to government. And every particular government is good or bad, as it anſwers or fails of anſwering theſe purpoſes. Now in our own, as it ſtands at preſent, our liberties are greater than thoſe of any other nation upon earth: we enjoy them ſo fully, that we abuſe them beyond example; and, I believe, no one perſon amongſt us, of knowledge and conſideration, doth or can ſuſpect our king of having the leaſt deſign to infringe any branch of them. The private property of the very meaneſt is as ſafe from the violence and oppreſſion of the greateſt, as good laws and an impartial execution of them can be hoped to make it. And for the public burthens we labour under, we have laid them on ourſelves, by repreſentatives of our own choice, for uſes, which we and our fathers, very juſtly in the main, thought neceſſary: In particular, for the moſt important uſe of ſecuring the nation, from time to time, againſt the miſchief that now once more hangs over

over us; which if we at laſt get rid of, all we have ſpent is well laid out; and if we ſubmit to, all is thrown away.

Still, there may doubtleſs have been faults committed, in relation both to theſe and other matters. But then, part of the faults commonly charged may be imaginary; for we are all as fallible, as thoſe whom we blame; and few of us in ſo good a ſituation for judging. Part may be of ſmall conſequence; and therefore no ground for any great reſentment. Part may have ariſen from our own miſconduct, as much, if not more, than from that of our ſuperiors. Part again may have proceeded from excuſable miſtakes or infirmities of theirs; for which, as we need allowance in ourſelves, we ſhould make allowance in others; eſpecially in princes, for the ſame reaſon as in parents; and to a fit degree in thoſe alſo that are employed by them. But whenceſoever apprehended grievances may have come, we have legal, conſtitutional, peaceable means for redreſſing them, with uncontrolled liberty to uſe thoſe means, if we will. And ſuppoſe they have not operated ſo ſpeedily or ſo effectually as we may wiſh, yet if force may be uſed inſtead of them, upon every failure or delay, eſpecially when cauſed merely by difference of opinions amongſt ourſelves, no ſociety can ever ſubſiſt. And if we are too corrupt a people, to expect any good from mutual perſuaſion; much leſs can we expect it from mutual violence.

Then, laſtly, as for our religion; the leaſt valued, I fear, yet infinitely the moſt valuable of all our bleſſings; and which guards and fences the reſt, in a manner that nothing elſe can: our religion, I ſay, is undeniably the moſt rational and worthy of God, the moſt humane and beneficial to men, the furtheſt from being either tyrannical or burdenſome, the freeſt from ſuperſtition, enthuſiaſm, and gloomineſs, of any in the world. It is eſtabliſhed with ſuch care, that the ſupport of it is inſeparable from that of the civil government; yet happily with ſuch moderation, as to bear hard on none who diſſent from it. The practice of it indeed, we muſt own, hath not been inforced on its profeſſors, ſo generally or ſo carefully as it ought, either by the authority or the example of thoſe, whoſe duty it is. Would to God it had! God grant it may! But ſtill, they, who have not duly excited men to piety, have

not reſtrained them from it: and every one's diſregard to it is principally chargeable on himſelf alone.

This I apprehend to be a true and a modeſt account of our preſent condition: for I have put the advantages of it at the loweſt, in order to ſay nothing that can be diſputed. And what are we to charge it for, if the attempt now making ſhould ſucceed? Indeed what have we to expect before it can ſucceed, (for every one muſt be convinced, that it will not be tamely ſubmitted to), but a wide and horrid view, in proportion as it makes a progreſs of bloodſhed, in the field and out of it, and of ravage at the pleaſure of a rude and uncivilized people, to the imminent hazard of every thing, and every perſon, dear to us? Judgments which this iſland hath been long without experiencing; but how long, and how heavily it may groan under them now, unleſs a ſpeedy check be given to this rebellion, God only knows. For a conquering enemy, had he the will, which is dreadful to truſt to, hath often not the power of reſtraining the deſolations of fire and ſword, when once they are begun.

But ſuppoſe this beginning of ſorrows over, what muſt follow?

With regard to our civil concerns, how large numbers are there, who have no other ſecurity for a conſiderable part, it may be the moſt, or the whole of their property, than the continuance of the government now in being; in whoſe hands it actually is? And ſhould that government fail, as it cannot be hoped, that what hath been lent for its ſupport, and proved one of its main ſupports, will be regarded very favourably by thoſe who come to overturn it, how terrible may the diſtreſſes of ſuch perſons be, and how much farther than themſelves muſt they extend? To all their domeſtics, all their dependants, all that have dealings or concerns with them. What multitudes are there again, whoſe fortunes are entirely, or principally, built on royal grants, judicial determinations, or acts of the legiſlature, made within the laſt ſix and fifty years? which, in caſe of a change, will all become queſtionable, as done by incompetent authority, and lie at the mercy of we know not whom. The perſon, who now threatens us, comes attended with a large and an indigent train of followers, collected from each of the three nations, who will think, and do

their utmoſt to make him think, that the long ſufferings of many of them, and the preſent dangerous ſervices of many more, can never be rewarded with ſufficient bounty. And when revenge, and poverty, and avarice, are ſet on work together, what forfeitures way be claimed, what miſdemeanors and treaſons charged in a nation, which will be looked on as the whole of it involved in treaſon for ſo many years paſt; or how unfairly the plaineſt laws in our favour may be interpreted to admit of ſuch attempts, or even wreſted to ſerve them; which of us all can ſo much as gueſs, or who can be aſſured of his own ſafety?

But beſides theſe hazards to the properties and the lives of particular perſons, in what ſtate will the commerce and poſſeſſions of the nation be? Think what innumerable debts the pretender to his majeſty's crown muſt needs have contracted in ſo long a ſpace, during which he hath had nothing of his own to ſubſiſt on: think what immenſe ſums foreign princes may charge on account of moſt expenſive wars, which they may plead were begun or carried on for his ſervice; and how dreadfully this nation may be exhauſted, to ſatisfy but a ſmall part of theſe demands; for which it will make no amends, to annihilate the preſent incumbrances on our public revenues, by a ruinous breach of the public faith. Think alſo, once more, what fatal conceſſions the powers who ſupport the preſent invaſion, and who will be wanted for a continual ſupport, even were it to ſucceed; what fatal conceſſions they will aſſuredly require in return, of places on which our trade depends, of indulgences in trade to themſelves, of reſtrictions upon us; which will reduce us to a condition impotent, precarious, and deſpicable.

I ſay not this, or any thing, to raiſe in you a ſpirit of unchriſtian bitterneſs, either againſt the ignorant wretches that have been deluded into this rebellion, or even againſt their leaders. Let them be judged of with all the charity, let them be treated with all the mercy, which their caſe will poſſibly allow; only let us ſee the miſchief, that their ſucceſs would bring on us, and exert ourſelves accordingly to prevent it.

But were we ever ſo ſafe in other reſpects, what ſecurity can we have with reſpect to our happy, envied, legal conſtitution; when that power of ſuſpending and diſpenſing with

laws, and levying money without law, which lays every proviſion, that can be made in favour of the ſubject, wholly at the ſovereign's feet, and yet was not only claimed, but exerciſed immediately before the revolution, ſhould come of courſe to be eſtabliſhed as a juſt prerogative, by what will be called a reſtoration? The rights, that we have enjoyed as indiſputably our own, from that time to this, may then be accounted ſeditious and treaſonable pretences; and every expreſſion of fondneſs for any remain of liberty, be deemed a ſtep towards rebellion; as indeed it will be thought but natural, to ſuſpect and ſtifle the leaſt breathing of that ſpirit which once delivered us, in order to prevent another change. Efforts notwithſtanding will, in all likelihood, be made towards one; how bloody and how fatal, who can tell? The apprehenſion of theſe efforts will be a much ſtronger plea, than in the late King *James*'s time, for keeping up a chargeable and dangerous ſtanding force, perhaps a foreign one. The dread of that force will intimidate ſome; and the principle of turning to their own advantage what they cannot help, will entice others to go every length of compliance that they are required. And a prince, coming in on the bottom of right hereditary and indefeaſible, will think he hath the cleareſt title to abſolute power. His partiſans, even whilſt he is out of poſſeſſion, have openly avowed that he hath; and what can be expected then, if he ſhould get into it? The mere exerciſe of ſuch a power very probably will not ſatisfy; but declarations and oaths be invented for the acknowledgment and ſupport of it; which it will be impoſſible for us either to make with innocence, or to refuſe with ſafety.

Then for the ſtate of our religion: No one inſtance can be given, that Popery ever ſpared Proteſtantiſm for any continuance, after it was able ſafely to oppreſs it. But leaſt of all will favour be ſhown here longer than neceſſity obliges. For, to whatever tenderneſs many of that communion may be inclined, as, no doubt, there are numbers amongſt them of mild and worthy perſons, yet the uncharitable part will aſſuredly prevail, as they always have done everywhere; and falſely imputing to our religion that pretended diſloyalty, which proceeded only from their illegal attempts to overturn the whole conſtitution, will not fail to argue, that the ſame cauſe muſt

produce again the ſame effect, and therefore muſt not be permitted to ſubſiſt. Think then, all that love the church of *England*, all that believe the doctrines of the reformation to be the truth of Chriſt, what a condition it will be, either to profeſs and practiſe the falſehoods and impieties, of which you are ſo thoroughly convinced, or to be driven from this, and every other place of God's public worſhip, into corners; nay, in a while, to be dragged out thence alſo, and ſacrificed to that *mother of abominations*, which hath ſo long been *drunken with the blood of the ſaints* *.

And let even them who are indifferent, or doubters, or unbelievers in religion, reflect on this at leaſt; that, as they are always inveighing againſt ſuperſtition, ſo the church of *Rome* is over-run with it to the higheſt degree poſſible; and, as they are always exclaiming againſt the wealth and the power of eccleſiaſtics, ſo the wealth and the power, the pride and the tyranny of Popery, are unſpeakably the greateſt, that ever the world knew. And if they will notwithſtanding go at preſent upon their favourite maxim, that all religions are the ſame, it will be a juſt judgment of God to make them feel the difference.

But to theſe things it may be anſwered, that the moſt ſolemn obligations have unqueſtionably been entered into, by him who claims the crown, for our entire ſecurity, both in church and ſtate. Nor indeed could any thing ſeem in ſpeculation more likely, becauſe nothing is more apparently requiſite in all common policy. And yet, ſurpriſing as it is, no one clear and explicit declaration of this kind was made by the pretender at the time of the laſt rebellion; nor can I hear of any made by him at preſent. And I beg you to conſider, if he will not promiſe plainly now, what will he do afterwards? For as to any good words, given by another in his name, what can be eaſier for him, than to diſavow them, as going beyond the commiſſion which he granted? But ſuppoſe the ſtrongeſt aſſurances given by himſelf; were they not given by the bloody Queen *Mary* to her Proteſtant ſubjects, who had fully merited them by their zeal for raiſing her to the throne? And did ſhe not perſecute them immediately, and burn them in little more than a twelvemonth? Were they

* Rev. xvii. 5, 6.

they not given by the late King *James*? And had he not ſtrong motives of gratitude, as well as conſcience, to keep them? And yet did he keep them for the ſmalleſt part of four years? How can we then flatter ourſelves, that any one, who claims under him, will be at all more favourable to that religion and thoſe liberties which have been all this time the capital enemies to his pretenſions? The moſt formal declarations that he can make, have been over and over, and long ſince the revolution, declared by the authority of the ſee of *Rome* "utterly null and void from the beginning, whee ver "they are prejudicial in any manner and the leaſt degree" (I uſe the very words of Pope *Clement* XI. in the very caſe of ſtipulations made in favour of Proteſtants) "to the Catho- "lic faith, the ſalvation of ſouls, or to any rights of the "church whatſoever, even though ſuch engagements have "been often ratified and confirmed by oath*." Let, therefore, the pretender to the crown make promiſes ever ſo full and expreſſive; let his natural diſpoſitions to keep them be ever ſo favourable; yet, as he profeſſes ſubjection of conſcience to the Pope's determinations, under whoſe eye he hath long reſided; in whoſe dominions his ſon, who hath now invaded us, was born and educated, and by whoſe bounty they have both been all along ſupported, he cannot refuſe to break any ties which ſhall be declared ſinful by his infallible guide, who may purpoſely have connived at his engaging in them, in order to his breaking them at a proper time. But if he were to refuſe it, can we imagine, that all his ſucceſſors too will be ſo obſtinately undutiful, as to ſpare a religion which they mortally hate, when they believe extirpating it will entitle them to heaven, and atone for all the ſins of a wicked life?

It muſt be acknowledged, Popery hath appeared milder of late than in former ages. Yet even our days have known the executions of *Thorn*, and the baniſhments of *Saltzburgh*: and *France*, this very year, hath been perſecuting and murdering our Proteſtant brethren for the profeſſion of their faith. Nor hath the church of *Rome* ever given up any one of the claims which it may have forborn to exerciſe; and, ſhould it once regain

* Clem. XI. Pont. Max. Epiſt. et Brevia. fol. Romæ, 1724. tom. ii. p. 179.

regain ſo much of its ancient power, as would neceſſarily follow from prevailing here, it would ſoon reſume its ancient fierceneſs in proportion.

Shall we perſuade ourſelves then, that fear will reſtrain a Popiſh prince from attempting to overturn our religion and laws? But what if his greateſt fear ſhould be that of damnation for not attempting it? which was the known caſe of King *James*, and may be that of others after him. Or what if it ſhould be held the ſafeſt way, in a political view, to make thorough work at once, by the aſſiſtance of foreigners now preparing to invade us.

Still, it may be ſaid, that whoever becomes our king, will at leaſt, for his own intereſt, be careful of the trade and power of the nation. But how can he, if he would, when he muſt undoubtedly have promiſed the contrary to foreign powers already? And if he is capable of deceiving them, how ſhall we truſt him? But ſuppoſing he hath promiſed them nothing, yet, if he prevails by their help, what can he be elſe than a deputy and a viceroy, ſubject to the commands of our moſt formidable adverſaries?

This conſideration ought, in reaſon, to alarm even thoſe who wiſh well to his cauſe, even thoſe who profeſs his religion, and make them utter enemies to his coming in ſuch a manner, however deſirous they may be of his coming otherwiſe. For can we, or can they, make terms with the power of *France*, when we have once given it footing in the heart of our country; or hope, that any terms which are made will ever be obſerved? Will that moſt ambitious and perfidious crown loſe ſuch an opportunity of weakening us by our own ſtrength, making us dependent on itſelf for ever, and tools to enſlave the reſt of *Europe*? Will it not treat both us, and the king it ſets over us, as the tyrant of *Babylon* did the prince whom he gave to the *Jews*? *He hath made a covenant with him, and taken an oath of him: he hath taken alſo the mighty of the land, that the kingdom might be baſe, that it might not lift up itſelf, but that by the keeping of his covenant it might ſtand* *.

Such

* Ezek. xvii. 13, 14.

Such then being the view of our dangers, let us proceed to conſider,

II. The ſpirit with which we ought to defend ourſelves againſt them. *Let us be of good courage, and play the men.* Theſe words may ſeem to expreſs the duty of the ſoldiery alone: and, without queſtion, they expreſs that peculiarly; and, joined with the following ones, clearly ſhew, that a ſtrong ſenſe of religion, and a virtuous concern for the common welfare, are the true principles that will give military perſons bravery and ſucceſs, as they did to thoſe whoſe hiſtory the text relates. But ſtill the more literal tranſlation is, *Be ſtrong, and let us ſtrengthen one another* *. In this ſenſe they concern us all: this, therefore, I ſhall follow.

And if ever cauſe required exerting and joining all the ſtrength and all the courage we have, this is that cauſe. For the attack is made by our enemies, foreign and domeſtic at once, on every thing dear to us, civil and ſacred; and conſcience towards God, as well as private intereſt and public good, demands our utmoſt zeal in ſuch a conteſt.

The plea which ſome would uſe to check this ardour, as if the government we live under ought not to be ſupported, becauſe the late King *James* and his ſon were ſet aſide by the people, is abſolutely groundleſs. For indeed King *James* ſet himſelf aſide; abandoned the government wilfully, rather than adminiſter it according to law; and, by ſo doing, left the nation at liberty, or rather under neceſſity to provide for itſelf in the manner it did; eſpecially as he carried away the perſon, whom he called his ſon, along with him. And had he not been carried away, all the world knows, it was generally and ſtrongly ſuſpected, that he was not the queen's child; and the three eſtates of the kingdom, the only fit judges of a doubtful ſucceſſion, fixed it, without taking notice of him. But had none of theſe things been ſo; that unhappy king, ſeduced by *Romiſh* bigots, had invaded, with a high hand, the religious and civil rights of his people; inſtead of giving the leaſt hope of amendment, he was going on with rapidity to the utter deſtruction of both. And ſubjects were not made for princes, to be treated as their abſolute property, and

* See Gen. xxv. 22. xli. 2. 2 Kings xiv. 8, 11.

and deſcend from one to another like cattle, let them be uſed as they will: But princes were made for their ſubjects, to govern them legally, and ſeek their good. What is the duty of the one, is the right of the other; and where there is a right, there ought to be a remedy. Common remedies are ever to be uſed in common caſes; and if they are inſufficient, ſingle perſons ought to bear every thing; and nations, every thing that can be borne without deſtruction, rather than break the public peace and eſtabliſhed order of government. But in extreme, imminent, univerſal dangers, methods of the laſt reſort, if neceſſary and likely to ſucceed, are fully warranted, by the nature of the thing, by our original conſtitution, by ancient practice upon it, and royal recognitions of it.

The ſcripture, indeed, commands what reaſon itſelf doth, ſubjection to the ſupreme powers. But how many other commands are there, which confeſſedly admit of proper exceptions? And were this to admit of none, yet the ſcripture doth not determine in whoſe hands the ſupreme power is lodged. And where it is divided, as it is with us, between the king and his great council, by whoſe joint authority every ſtatute is expreſſed to be made, he who refuſes to ſtand to that diviſion, as the late King *James* did openly, both by word and deed, renounces the authority that belonged to him under it; and other authority he hath none. Or ſuppoſe even this doubtful, the ſcripture requires ſubjection: But to whom? To *the powers that be*, the actual, viſible governments of every country. Theſe, it declares, *are ordained of God;* and that *they who reſiſt, ſhall receive damnation* *. Not the leaſt hint given of inquiring into the juſtice of an eſtabliſhment in its firſt riſe long ago; a thing which few ſubjects can do, and perhaps few governments can bear. Not the ſlighteſt intimation of adhering for ever to the family of an abdicated prince; and going on, age after age, to aſcribe the ſovereign authority over a nation, to a perſon that hath no means of exerciſing any one act of authority. The neceſſities of mankind render it abſurd; the practice and the notions of mankind have always been contrary to it. Heathens, Jews, Chriſtians, Papiſts, Proteſtants, all the world have agreed

* Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

agreed in the point with univerſal conſent; excepting a ſmall handful of men in this one age and nation: Perſons greatly to be pitied, and highly to be eſteemed, while they ſubmit peaceably to inconveniencies for conſcience ſake; but ſurely guilty of as indefenſible a ſingularity as ever was.

There may indeed often be a doubt, and ſometimes it may laſt a good while, which are *the powers that be:* whether a government is yet to be conſidered as eſtabliſhed, or not. But in our own caſe, if a duration of ſo many years, and the peaceable ſucceſſion of ſo many princes, and the repeated acknowledgments of the whole people of theſe kingdoms, and of all the ſovereigns and nations of the earth, do not make it a clear point, in whoſe hands the ſupreme authority of this country long hath been, and actually now is, nothing of ſuch a nature can ever be clear at all. Very few of us have either known, or lived under any other government: we have all of us claimed, and enjoyed the protection of this; we have acted in purſuance of its authority; we have prayed continually for its preſervation; we have many of us bound our ſouls by ſolemn oaths, and ſome of us by repeated ones, to maintain it; in ſo doing, we maintain at the ſame time, every thing that is valuable to us and our poſterity; and there cannot be a firmer tie upon us, than theſe things together; nor more abandoned wickedneſs, than to break through it.

Strengthened thus then within ourſelves, let us proceed to *ſtrengthen one another.* God knows, inſtead of this, we have taken great pains to weaken one another, by ſeparate intereſts and views, animoſities and reſentments, unkind ſuſpicions, and unjuſt imputations. What party or ſort of men hath been moſt to blame in this reſpect, were it ever ſo eaſy to ſay, would be very unfit; when the plain concern is, not to accuſe and recriminate, but all to unite in what affects all ſo nearly. They therefore, who have hitherto thought the danger of ſuch an attempt ſmall, let them now ſhew they were far from wiſhing it greater. They, who have been diſſatisfied with particular meaſures of government, let them now give proof, that they were not diſaffected to the government itſelf; and if poſſibly in any thing they may have oppoſed too far, take this fitteſt opportunity of making amends. This will demonſtrate the uprightneſs of their intentions, give weight

to their ſentiments on other matters, and pull down the falſe hopes, that our enemies have founded on our domeſtic diſputes. But then, at the ſame time, if zeal of any for the preſent eſtabliſhment, hath tempted them to judge too hardly concerning the affection of others towards it, they ought now candidly to acknowledge their error; embrace thoſe as true friends, who approve themſelves to be ſuch in the day of trial; and remember for the future, that ſtrength is attained, not by diviſion, but by union. Indeed we ſhould all remember, inſtead of aggravating what our oppoſers have done amiſs, to reflect ſeriouſly what we and our friends have been faulty in; and perhaps we ſhould moſt of us find, it hath been a great deal too much.

But it is not mutual good temper alone that our caſe requires, but mutual aſſiſtance and encouragement, to be given with ſpirit by each of us, according to his ability, and the nature of his ſtation, to all around him: by ranking ourſelves openly on the ſide we are of; joining our counſels, contributing our money, hazarding our perſons, if need require it; by inſtructing, undeceiving, exciting, fortifying as many others as we can. That part would be indifferent, part timorous, and all reſiſt weakly, was the great thing, that the adverſaries of the government promiſed themſelves, and its friends were apprehenſive of. God be thanked, both of them in ſome degree have ſeen their miſtake. Let us go on to complete the conviction, by a daily increaſe of reſolute activity. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees: ſay to them that are of a fearful heart, Be ſtrong, fear not* *.

One thing more to be mentioned under this head is, that if the preſent endeavour to ruin us ſhould increaſe, though it were conſiderably, the public expence neceſſary to defend us, we are ſurely neither to wonder, nor to murmur at at; but bear with cheerfulneſs what may be inconvenient, in order to prevent what muſt be ruinous; and conſider well, that were this deſign to take place, we ſhould probably pay much more to foreigners, as a reward for enſlaving us, than now to our own governors, as the means of keeping us free.

But

* Iſ. xxxv. 3, 4.

But human means alone, human prudence and ſtrength, be it ever ſo great, is no ſufficient ground of confidence. For *the Moſt High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomſoever he will**. We muſt never forget therefore,

III. An humble dependence on heaven for the event of all. *And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.*

What it will ſeem good to him to do with us, when we conſider our national wickedneſs and ingratitude to him, it muſt be acknowledged we have great cauſe to fear. He hath bleſſed theſe nations beyond moſt, if not any other part of the world; and we have turned all his bleſſings into occaſions of ſin. He hath given us wealth, and we have applied it to the wicked purpoſes of diſſoluteneſs and luxury. He hath given us liberty; and we have abuſed it to the bittereſt hatred, and the groſſeſt licentiouſneſs. He hath given us true religion, and we have ſlighted and ſcorned it; caſt off the worſhip of God, received the mercies of his providence without thankfulneſs, and the threatenings of it without humility; nay, ridiculed the obligations even of probity and moral virtue, till we have ſcarce principle enough left to be concerned for any thing, but preſent pleaſure and preſent intereſt. Our abhorrence of Popery is gone: our zeal againſt ſlavery is degenerated into faction: our zeal for the government into private ſelfiſhneſs. We daily accuſe another of theſe things: we never think of reforming ourſelves. And what can be, in a rational view, the probable conſequence, in a religious one, the juſt puniſhment of ſuch behaviour, but that which the Divine Wiſdom hath ſo clearly foretold? *For that they hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counſel, and deſpiſed my reproof: therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices* †.

It is by ſlow and ſilent, but it is by effectual methods, that God ſhews himſelf the governor of the world. Princes that neglect to ſupport his authority, ſhall find their own decay with it. Subordinate rulers, that truſt to other than virtuous arts of government, ſhall find they have leaned on a broken reed. And nations, that indulge profaneneſs and profligate-

* Dan iv. 17. † Prov. i. 29, 30, 31.

neſs, ſhall experience them to bring on confuſion and ruin. Eſcaping it in one ſhape for once is nothing; in that, or ſome other, it muſt fall upon them, if they continue ſuch as they are. And were ever ſo great ruin to fall upon us now, what would it be more, than *Samuel's* prediction verified? *If ye ſhall ſtill do wickedly, ye ſhall be conſumed, both ye and your king* *. And what could we ſay, but acknowledge before God, with the penitent *Jews* in *Nehemiah*, *Thou art juſt in all that is brought upon us: for thou haſt done right, but we have done wickedly: neither have our kings, our princes, our prieſts, nor our fathers* (would to God there were not the moſt cauſe of all to add, nor we ourſelves) *kept thy law* †.

Conſidering our caſe in this light then, we have ſmall reaſon to *be of good courage*. And yet, conſidering the divine mercies, we are far from having any reaſon to deſpond, if we have any heart to repent. The cauſe we are engaged in, is that of right and truth, and God's own honour. Defending it valiantly, is performing one part of our duty to him; and deſerting it, would be filling up at once the meaſure of our iniquities to the utmoſt. Wicked as we have been, and are, yet if we will but, *at leaſt in this our day, know the things that belong to our peace* ‡, there is ſtill abundant room to truſt in the gracious protection, that we have ſo often experienced; and, provided we can but now bring our hearts in earneſt to fear God, we have no need to fear man. What hath hitherto happened, is indeed more than enough to awaken us from that ſupineneſs, which it is aſtoniſhing we ſhould have indulged ſo long; but not at all to make us doubtful concerning the event, were there only any proſpect, that we ſhould render ourſelves fit objects of our Maker's favour. For the ſake of a few good, there may be mercy in ſtore for the reſt. The more of us become ſo, the greater is the hope. And would but this national alarm produce, what undoubtedly heaven hath deſigned it for, a national reformation, we might boldly ſay to our enemies, in the words of holy writ, *Aſſociate yourſelves, O ye people, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces: take counſel together, and it ſhall come to nought: ſpeak the word, and it*

* 1 Sam. xii. 25. † Neh ix. 33, 34. ‡ Luke xix. 42.

it ſhall not ſtand: for God is with us. Sanctify, therefore, the Lord of Hoſts; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, and he ſhall be for a ſanctuary *. *For God will ſave* Sion, *and will build the cities of* Judah. *The poſterity alſo of his ſaints ſhall inherit it; and they that love his name ſhall dwell therein* †. *Their children ſhall continue, and their ſeed ſhall be eſtabliſhed before him* ‡.

* If. viii. 9, 10, 13, 14. † Pſal. lxix. 35. 36. ‡ Pſal. cii. 8.

SER-

SERMON CXXI.

(Preached in 1745.)

AGAINST EXTREME SOLICITUDE CONCERNING WORLDLY AFFAIRS; AND THE WISDOM OF REPOSING UNBOUNDED CONFIDENCE IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

PHIL. iv. 6, 7.

Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds, through Chriſt Jeſus.

DANGERS are ſo conſtant, and ſufferings ſo frequent, in human life, that behaving properly under the apprehenſions and experience of them, conſtitutes a very conſiderable part of our buſineſs here. But when Providence permits a peculiar degree of either to be our lot, it calls us peculiarly to think what methods will beſt preſerve us from them, or carry us through them. Now theſe are of two ſorts; worldly prudence, and religious wiſdom. The precepts of the former it is not the buſineſs of this place to deliver, but to limit and perfect them by the dictates of the latter; that we may neither endeavour to ſecure ourſelves by acting wrong, nor doubt of ſupport in acting right. We are apt to look on religion, very injuriouſly, as only preſcribing diſagreeable duties; whereas it ſuggeſts the kindeſt advice, and ſuperadds the moſt comfortable promiſes; which cannot be done more completely, in the great point of moderating fear and uneaſineſs, than it is in the text; where we have

I. A friendly caution: *Be careful for nothing.*

II. A moſt neceſſary direction: *But in every thing, by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.*

III. An aſſurance of the happy effect which this conduct will produce: *And the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds, through Chriſt Jeſus.*

I. A friendly caution: *Be careful for nothing.* Words which neither common reaſon allows us to take in their utmoſt extent, nor ſcripture itſelf. For it every where demands from us the moſt earneſt care about the things of another world; and enjoins, quite as often as it needed, a moderate care about the affairs of this. *Being careful,* therefore, muſt mean, in the paſſage which I have read to you, as an expreſſion mighty little varied from it, being full of care, doth, for the moſt part, in our daily ſpeech; not a diſcreet and rational, but a diſquieting and tormenting ſolicitude: and that principally, not concerning our behaviour, which is the only thing in our power, but the event, which is often entirely out of it. This the original *Greek* phraſe elſewhere uſually ſignifies, though not always. In the ſixth of St. *Matthew*, it is many times rendered, *Take no thought.* But there alſo we muſt remember, that only what is immoderate was intended to be forbidden; which it had been happy if our tranſlation had more determinately expreſſed.

Thoughtfulneſs concerning our deportment, our welfare, that of others, and the public, ſo far as it will really be of uſe, is a duty of indiſpenſable obligation. And firſt acting at random, then turning our eyes from the evil day, when we ſee it coming, inſtead of conſidering how we may avert it, or make the beſt proviſion againſt it, will prove the ſureſt way to bring it on with its blackeſt horrors. But the contrary extreme, anxiety, is both a miſerable feeling in itſelf, and the parent of many farther miſchiefs, without any mixture of good. It repreſents every object of terror as vaſtly greater than it is in truth; and frequently gives far more pain beforehand, than the preſence of all that we fear is capable of giving. Nay, it makes us tremble at mere ſpectres; and fills us with the moſt alarming ſuſpicions, ſometimes of what can-

not happen, often of what is highly improbable. And yet, were it ever ſo likely, exceſſive dread will do nothing towards preſerving us from it. Calm reflection will inſtruct and excite us to do every thing for ourſelves which we are able to do; and the utmoſt agonies of diſquiet can never carry us beyond our abilities. Indeed, very commonly vehement emotions either hinder us from ſeeing what is fit, or diſqualify us from performing it; nay, hurry us into what is very unfit and prejudicial to the point which we have in view.

But were they to leave us otherwiſe entirely maſters of ourſelves, that eagerneſs of looking farther than we can ſee, which they always beget, hath a powerful tendency to miſlead us very unhappily. Dangers which we think we diſcern at a diſtance, may have no reality; or, if they have, may never draw near. Dangers that are near, may never reach us; and evils that have reached us, may vaniſh on a ſudden. Theſe are no reaſons againſt prudent forecaſt; but they are ſtrong reaſons againſt extracting wretchedneſs out of ſpeculations on futurity, inſtead of following quietly and cheerfully the proper buſineſs of the preſent day; ſince *we know not what another may bring forth* *; and, conſequently, require us to contrive or execute, to grieve or rejoice at. *To-morrow*, our bleſſed Saviour hath told us, *ſhall take thought for the things of itſelf* †: Time, as it runs on, will direct us much better than we can gueſs now, what precautions we are to take, and what judgments we are to form, about remote affairs: and ſince all that appears at this inſtant likely to fall out, or wiſe to do, may poſſibly in the next appear quite otherwiſe, we ought ſtudiouſly to moderate both our actions and our paſſions, by recollecting the mutability of the world; which would ſave us a vaſt deal of fruitleſs labour and needleſs miſery. We every one of us think the ſorrows of life abundantly enough; why then ſhould we multiply them by long anticipations, and load ourſelves at once with misfortunes preſent and to come, unmindful of our gracious Lord's important maxim, *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof* ‡? Had our Maker framed the human mind in ſuch

* Prov. xxvii. 1. † Matth. vi. 34. ‡ Matth. vi. 34.

ſuch manner, that we muſt have been *always forecaſting grievous things* *; and ſuffering every hour, in thought, all that through a courſe of years we are to ſuffer in reality, and much more, we ſhould certainly have looked on it as very hard uſage. Why then will we bring ourſelves into a ſtate, in which if God had placed us, we ſhould have complained of him as cruel? He hath mercifully hid future events from us, leſt the foreſight of them ſhould make us unhappy: and we pry into them by conjecture, and dwell upon them by imagination, that we may be unhappy whether he will or not.

This, you ſee, is more than folly; it is evidently ſin. He intended us to live here in comfort and peace; and we are not at liberty to fruſtrate his deſign, by making ourſelves uneaſy and wretched. Both nature and ſcripture plainly forbid it. Nor have we the leaſt ground to hope, that the fault will be deemed a puniſhment ſevere enough for itſelf. Many others are accompanied with grievous miſery, to which, notwithſtanding, more hereafter is deſervedly threatened. And the guilt of inordinate ſolicitude is greater than we generally apprehend. It implies not only diſobedience to God, but diſtruſt in him. It unfits us for the offices of piety and of common life. By dejecting the ſpirits, and ſouring the temper, it renders us different, in many reſpects, from what we ſhould be, to all around us. It leads perſons into ſtrong temptations of raiſing and cheering themſelves under their troubles, by falſe and pernicious ſupports, or of ſeeking deliverance from them by diſhoneſt arts and compliances. It infects others, who ſee it, with the ſame apprehenſions; which may produce the ſame or worſe effects on their quiet, nay, their innocence. And in proportion as diſcouraging alarms become epidemical, the calamity dreaded becomes likely to happen. Still, ſo much of this wrong turn as is really conſtitutional and unavoidable weakneſs, will certainly not be imputed as criminal: and therefore we ought not to double our uneaſineſs, by adding to involuntary anxieties a rigid condemnation of ourſelves for them, but ſtrive againſt them to the utmoſt of our power; and then be ſatisfied with the conſciouſneſs that we have done ſo; only not deceiving our

* Wiſd. xvii. 11.

hearts with a notion that we have reſiſted fears, which in truth we have indulged.

But ſome will ſay, "How can we reſiſt them? Muſt we "not of neceſſity be terrified at what we perceive is terrible; "be concerned about what we are ſenſible is of great con- "cern to us? Where is the virtue of pretending to blind "ourſelves, or even of doing it actually, if we could?" None at all certainly. But the rule preſcribed you is, not to ſhut, but open your eyes, and contemplate the whole of your caſe deliberately and impartially. For perhaps it is not ſo bad, perhaps not near ſo bad, as you conceive, though you were to look on it only in a worldly view. And yet, were outward appearances, and our own ſtrength, all that we had to look at, there would be no wonder if ſometimes our hearts fainted within us at the proſpect; for the ſtouteſt and the proudeſt hearts have fainted before us on like occaſions. But the never-failing foundation of comfort is this. A Being infinitely powerful, wiſe, and benevolent, ſuperintends the univerſe continually: theſe attributes afford us large ground of hope; and, that our own unworthineſs may raiſe no doubt, his expreſs declarations give us full aſſurance, that if we fly to him with humble faith, *he will not ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape* *. The moſt uſual anxiety of men is about the daily neceſſaries of life. With reſpect to theſe, therefore, he condeſcends to argue with us particularly; and the argument will hold as well concerning leſs common exigencies; that ſince he ſuſtains the vegetable part of the creation, which can do nothing for itſelf, and the animal, which cannot do near ſo much as we, certainly he will take of us, on doing what we ought, a care proportionable to the ſuperiority of our nature. For in this lies the force of our Saviour's reaſoning. And when he ſaith, *Behold the fowls of the air, they ſow not, neither do they reap, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are ye not much better than they* †? He doth not mean that they take no pains, and therefore we are to take none. They take a great deal, in ſeeking food, and contriving ſecurity againſt dangers, for themſelves and for their young,

* 1 Cor. x. 13. † Matth. vi. 26.

young, according to the extent of their faculties. And we are to take as much, in proportion to the extent of ours. But then, as providence furniſhes to them, ſo far as conſiſts with its wiſe purpoſes, whatever they need, and cannot acquire by their own power, the ſame providence will certainly watch over us with more peculiar tenderneſs, even in the preſent ſtate; beſides, that what we ſuffer now ſhall increaſe our happineſs hereafter. And therefore, ſince they are eaſy in their condition, well may we in ours. For it would be ſtrange indeed, if that order of earthly beings, which enjoys the greateſt favour beyond all compariſon, ſhould be the only one diſcontented. Reflect then; where human care ends, the divine care begins. The duty of to-day is our buſineſs, the event of to-morrow is our heavenly Father's: and ſurely you do not wiſh to remove it out of his hands into your own; or ſurmiſe, that you can poſſibly be unſafe, while under the protection of him with whom *the very hairs of your head are all numbered* *. Here then we have a ſecure refuge againſt inquietude. But let us remember, if, having it, we uſe it not; if, profeſſing faith in God, we allow ourſelves to be as much diſconcerted and perplexed on every alarm as they that *have no hope, and are without God in the world* †; we either think unworthily of him, or behave quite unſuitably to what we think; and our guilt is greater, as our temptation to it is leſs. When, therefore, on being troubled and caſt down, we are inclined to lay the blame on accidental or natural lowneſs of ſpirits, or whatever excuſe occurs, let us *take heed, leſt there be in us an evil heart of unbelief* ‡ or diſobedience. If there be, amending that is the way to *uphold him that was falling, and ſtrengthen the feeble knees* §.

But in vain ſhall we attempt any thing beneficial to us, if we truſt to ourſelves for ſucceſs. And, therefore, to make his caution effectual, the apoſtle ſubjoins

II. A moſt neceſſary direction. *In every thing, by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.*

The uſual method is, to be *careful about many things* ‖, and pray about nothing; but the right one is, to be careful about

* Matt. x. 30. † Eph. ii. 12. ‡ Heb. iii. 12.
§ Job iv. 4. ‖ Luke x. 42.

about nothing, but pray about every thing; which is of importance enough to be laid before the Lord of All. The movements of our hearts, indeed, though unuttered, are clearly diſcerned by him: and he foreſaw from eternity whatever we ſhould wiſh on every occaſion. But the ſcripture ſpeaks in the language of men; and calls that *making known our requeſts to God*, which is only expreſſing before him what he is perfectly acquainted with already, in order to imprint more efficaciouſly, on ourſelves and others, the ſentiments concerning him which belong to our condition.

Applying to the Almighty in our difficulties, immediately reminds us on whom we and all things depend: and brings it ſtrongly to our thoughts, that the moſt threatening dangers cannot advance one ſtep farther than infinite wiſdom ſees it proper they ſhould, and infinite goodneſs permits. Placing ourſelves in his preſence, awes and compoſes our worldly fears; not by a ſervile dread of him forcibly overcoming them, and ſubſtituting itſelf a ſtill worſe terror in their ſtead, but by a filial reverence, mixed with humble reliance on his favour, which calms and revives us in ſuch manner, that we perceive our ſolicitudes to vaniſh, even whilſt we are confeſſing them, and quickly ſmile at what we ſhuddered before. Then beſides, venting our deſires to him, ſhews us in the fulleſt light, which are ſinful and to be repreſſed, if we hope for acceptance with him: and begging his help, muſt powerfully admoniſh us, that we are not to think of helping ourſelves by methods diſpleaſing to him, but adhere ſtrictly to our duty, and be aſſured it will lead us out of whatever perplexities it leads us into. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy truſt in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs* *. Further yet; praying to *our* Father which is in heaven, leads us to conſider him as our common Father; who is concerned, not only for us, but for all our friends; and expects us to be zealous for the general good, as well as our own; and on no account to withdraw from the ſervice of the body of which he hath made us members. Piety, therefore, excites the trueſt and firmeſt public ſpirit; but ſmooths and tempers, at the ſame time, that roughneſs and vehemence which too frequently renders

* Pſ. xxxvii. 5.

renders it ineffectual and hurtful, by promoting, as it doth beyond all things, an humble opinion of ourſelves, and meekneſs towards others.

With ſuch diſpoſitions, we ſhall be duly qualified for the mercy we intreat; and they who are, will never fail to receive it. For *this is the confidence which we have in him*, ſaith the beloved diſciple, *that if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have the petitions which we deſired of him* *. We are ſure of the very favours we beg, if they are conducive to his glory, and the happineſs of his creatures; which doubtleſs the deliverance of this nation from its enemies muſt be, ſince we profeſs and ſupport his holy truth, would we but penitently conform our conduct to it. And his long forbearance under our provocations, gives us room to expect every inſtance of mercy, in caſe of our amendment. What indeed the humble applications of a few may do for others, he only knows. But for themſelves they will certainly obtain infinitely greater benefits, than ſharing in the higheſt degree of earthly proſperity. Now, the ſole reaſon of our praying for any thing is, that we ſuppoſe it will be good for us. And therefore we pray for nothing of this world abſolutely, but on that condition. So that if God, who knows beſt, withholds it becauſe it will be otherwiſe, he grants our requeſt in the general, though he refuſes it in the particular: and if we are wiſe, far from being overwhelmed by the ſevereſt diſpenſations, we ſhall not only be contented, but glad, in ſuch meaſure as human infirmity and ſympathy permit, that *his will ſhould be done, not ours* †.

For this cauſe the apoſtle, when he might have ſaid, what moſt people would have thought very ſufficient, that we ſhould *make our requeſts known unto God* with reſignation, choſe to ſay more, that we ſhould do it *with thankſgiving*. And indeed we ought to be heartily thankful, not only for the many and great bleſſings, temporal and ſpiritual, national and perſonal, which God continues to us in the midſt of his corrections, (O that we would all think ſeriouſly, how many and great they are) but even for his corrections themſelves; and much

* 1 John v. 14, 15. † Luke xxii. 42.

much more for the alarms and warnings, the liftings up of his rod, which are deſigned to prevent the neceſſity of heavier judgments. What he doth with this view, though it produce terrifying apprehenſions, is the moſt real kindneſs; the only kindneſs that we permit him at preſent to ſhow. Many, we may hope, will be influenced by ſuch awful notices, to amend their ways. But at leaſt we need not fail of being influenced ourſelves to what is right. And then, whatever the event be to thoſe around us, to us it ſhall be happy; if in no other reſpect, yet in that, which, beyond all compariſon, is of the greateſt conſequence: *Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, ſhall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* *.

Knowing theſe things, well might the apoſtle add in the text,

III. An aſſurance of the bleſſed effect, which raiſing our thoughts from earth to heaven will produce. *And the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds, through Jeſus Chriſt.*

Bad perſons, as they have never any well-grounded, have ſeldom any long-continued peace of mind, even in proſperity; and much leſs can they hope for it in troubles and dangers. If they have not been juſt and merciful, they are conſcious of ill-deſerving behaviour to their fellow-creatures. If they have not been uniformly virtuous and religious, they know they have acted undutifully and ungratefully to their Creator. If they have not, by due application for pardon, reconciled themſelves to him, the guilt of their ſins remains upon them; and the whole creation is a weapon in his hands againſt them. They may be ſtupidly unmoved by theſe conſiderations; they may affect to hide their convictions, or ſtrive to run away from them into whatever preſents itſelf. But uſually the livelieſt and ſtrongeſt natural ſpirits will ſink under them in a time of ſevere trial. Or ſuppoſing they do not; the more obſtinately ſuch perſons hold out, and the more gaily they go on, the heavier, in all likelihood, will be their preſent ruin, but the dreadfuller certainly their final ſentence. For ſooner or later, and with full recompence for ever ſo long delay, the ſolemn

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

ſolemn and repeated denunciation muſt be verified, *Whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap* *.

But the obedient and devout ſoul, which looks beyond worldly appearances, and reſts itſelf on the Divine Providence, is entitled, whatever outward commotions happen, to the trueſt, the ſteadieſt, the moſt delightful inward compoſedneſs; to that *peace of God*, that ſenſe of being in friendſhip with him, that feeling of comfort and joy flowing from him, *which paſſeth all underſtanding*, exceeds the conceptions of thoſe who have not experienced it, and ſhall exceed hereafter the preſent conceptions of thoſe who have. Yet the ſincerely good may not conſtantly enjoy a very high degree of this. The imperfection of their goodneſs, the lowneſs of their ſpirits, errors of judgment, ſudden alarms, afflictions uncommonly grievous, may leſſen, may interrupt it; or God may, for ſecret reaſons of infinite wiſdom, *hide his face from them* † for a time. But, ordinarily ſpeaking, their tranquillity and conſolation will be found proportionable to their improvements in real religion. And, though undoubtedly ſeaſons of difficulty and hazard will give ſome uneaſineſs to the beſt minds, yet no more than is moderate and very tolerable, no more than leaves them, on the whole, in a peaceful ſtate; and able to *caſt* if not *all*, as they ſhould, yet the moſt of *their care on him, who careth for them* ‡.

Let us therefore try ourſelves by this rule, whether we have indeed practical faith and confidence in the Almighty. And if not, let us inſtantly labour to obtain it, by a total forſaking of *our iniquities, which have ſeparated between us and him* §, and humble addreſſes *for grace to help in time of need* ‖. The common reſource is to the help of man alone; *there be many that ſay, who will ſhew us any good?* but the language of a well-inſtructed heart is, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us* ¶. *Some put their truſt in chariots, and ſome in horſes: but let us remember the name of the Lord our God* **: provide for our ſecurity with the utmoſt prudence, and defend our cauſe with the boldeſt zeal: but ſtill rely on him alone, *who giveth victory unto kings* ††. Every other

* Gal. vi. 7. † Pſal. xliii. 1. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 7.
§ Iſa. lix. 2. ‖ Heb. iv. 16. ¶ Pſal. iv. 6, 7.
** Pſal. xx. 7. †† Pſal. cxliv. 10.

other aid may fail, but God cannot. *He is able to ſave by many or by few* *: *to break the arm of the wicked* †, *and diſappoint the devices of the crafty* ‡. *He ſtilleth the raging of the ſea, the noiſe of its waves, and the madneſs of the people* §. Under his conduct, the *things*, that ſeem the moſt *againſt us* ‖, may prove the very means of our deliverance; and the fierceſt ſtorms drive the ſhip with more ſpeed into a ſafe harbour. Therefore *ſay to them that are of a fearful heart, Be ſtrong, fear not: behold your God will come with a recompence; he will come and ſave you* ¶. All who are penetrated with theſe truths, though timorous naturally, and while the danger is diſtant, ſhall, when it draws near, *out of weakneſs be made ſtrong, and wax valiant in fight* **: not with a tumultuous and tranſitory animal courage, but a calm and ſtedfaſt reſolution, *keeping*, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, *their hearts and minds*, quieting their paſſions, fixing their judgments, and by conſequence determing their behaviour. The reaſonings of ſuch perſons will be thoſe of the pſalmiſt: *God is our hope and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midſt of the ſea; though the waters rage and ſwell, and though the mountains ſhake at the tempeſt of the ſame. The rivers of the flood thereof ſhall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Moſt High. God is in the midſt of her, therefore ſhall ſhe not be removed: God ſhall help her, and that right early. The nations make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved: but God ſheweth his voice, and the earth ſhall melt away. The Lord of hoſts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge* ††. Theſe are the grounds, and there cannot be ſtronger, on which a good perſon, unleſs he is wanting to himſelf, *will not be afraid of any evil tidings: for his heart ſtandeth faſt, and believeth in the Lord* ‡‡. Nay, were it not the pleaſure of God to deliver his people from their enemies, even in that caſe, they would be enabled to *ſuffer according to his will, and commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator* §§.

But

* 1 Sam. xiv. 6.
† Pſal. x. 15.
‡ Job v. 12.
§ Pſal. lxv. 7.
‖ Gen. xlii. 36.
¶ Iſa xxxv. 4.
** Heb. xi. 34.
†† Pſal. xlvi. 1—7.
‡‡ Pſal. cxii. 7.
§§ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

But then we muſt ever obſerve, by whoſe means alone this unconquerable firmneſs, this inconceivable ſerenity, is to be acquired. *The peace of God ſhall keep your hearts and minds, through Chriſt Jeſus.* For as, without faith in religion, perſons very often have no refuge at all in the ſtorms and troubles that overtake them; ſo, without faith in the Chriſtian religion, they are liable ſtill to moſt uneaſy and diſheartening fluctuations; from doubts, how far providence extends; doubts of their own title to forgiveneſs and favour, doubts of the exiſtence and duration of a future reward; to all which the goſpel hath put the happieſt end; informing mankind with certainty of every thing that could induce them to act right with cheerful perſeverance; and confirming the higheſt expectations, which they can poſſibly entertain, by that equally convincing and affecting argument: *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things* *? Thus then *we have hope, as an anchor of the ſoul, ſure and ſtedfaſt, and which entereth into that within the veil;* lays hold on the promiſed ſtate of inviſible glory, *whither the forerunner is entered for us*, to take poſſeſſion already in our name, *even Jeſus* †: whoſe gracious words to his diſciples we ought to have conſtantly preſent to our thoughts, when clouds ariſe and darken our proſpect, hang over our heads, and ſeem ready to burſt upon us. *Theſe things have I ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye ſhall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world* ‡. *Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid* §.

* Rom. viii. 32.
† Heb. vi. 19, 20.
‡ John xvi. 33.
§ John xiv. 27.

SERMON CXXII.

(Preached in 1746, on the Victory at CULLODEN.)

ON MERCIFUL DELIVERANCE FROM IMMINENT DANGERS, AND THE DUTY OF GRATITUDE TO GOD ON ACCOUNT OF THEM.

2 COR. i. 9, 10.

But we had the ſentence of death in ourſelves, that we ſhould not truſt in ourſelves, but in God which raiſeth the dead: Who delivered us from ſo great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we truſt, that he will yet deliver us.

OUR gracious ſovereign having appointed, of his own mere motion and perſonal piety, a ſolemn acknowledgment to heaven, for our late victory over the rebels, to be inſerted in the prayers of this day, permit me, as far as I am able, to be *a helper of your joy* * on that happy occaſion. And may God effectually diſpoſe us all to *rejoice before him* † in ſo wiſe and religious a manner, as may lay a ſure foundation for his *rejoicing over us to do us good* ‡; for his going on to *comfort us again, after the time that he hath afflicted us, the years wherein we have ſuffered adverſity* §.

I hope it may promote this bleſſed end, if we conſider our condition in the ſame views in which the text places before us that of the apoſtle St. *Paul*, comprehending an account,

I. Of his danger: *A great death, of which he had the ſentence within himſelf.*

II. Of

* Verſe 24. † Deut. xii. 12. ‡ Jer. xxxii. 41. § Pſal. xc. 15.

II. Of his defender from it: *God, who had delivered, and did ſtill deliver him.*

III. Of the reaſons for which he was firſt permitted to fall into this danger, then brought out of it: *that he might not truſt in himſelf, but might truſt in God, which raiſeth the dead:* as accordingly he declares he doth, for deliverances yet future.

I. His danger: *A great death, of which he had the ſentence within himſelf.* Death being the extremity of temporal ſufferings, in the *Hebrew* idiom, which expreſſes every thing ſtrongly, ſignifies any very dreadful evil or hazard. Thus *Pharoah*, on the plague of locuſts, begs of *Moſes*: *Entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only* *. But more eſpecially hazard of life goes under that name. Whence *David* ſpeaks of himſelf, as *counted with them that go down into the pit; free among the dead, like the ſlain that lie in the grave* †. Now St. *Paul*, to uſe his own phraſe towards the latter end of this epiſtle, had been *in deaths often* ‡. And therefore the term, *ſo great a death*, muſt denote, that on the occaſion, to which he refers, his peril was imminent, peculiarly terrible, and, humanely ſpeaking, unavoidable. His own words are, *we were preſſed out of meaſure, above ſtrength, inſomuch that we deſpaired even of life* §. Farther particulars cannot now be diſcovered, excepting one, which he adds, of ſmall conſequence to us, that this trouble came to him in *Aſia*. But, by his manner of notifying it, and the warmth of his deſcription, it muſt have been recent, ſince he wrote the former epiſtle.

How lately we have been in like diſtreſs you all know. How *great a death* we muſt have ſuffered, had our enemies prevailed; how total a deſtruction of every thing valuable to us on earth, that can be deſtroyed by man; I endeavoured to ſhew you at the very beginning of their attempt; and the whole body of the nation, God be thanked, have expreſſed the ſtrongeſt deteſtation of it. May neither the horror of the impending ruin, nor the frightful probability there was of its overwhelming us, ever be forgot! Recollect, I entreat you, what your ſucceſſive apprehenſions have been for many months

* Exod. x. 17. † Pſal. lxxxviii. 4, 5. ‡ Chap. xi. 23. § Ver. 8.

paſt; on the early and entire, and eaſy defeat of our forces by the rebels; on the defenceleſs condition in which the iſland then was; on their paſſing afterwards unhurt by two armies poſted to intercept them, and approaching towards this capital; on the proſpect of powerful aſſiſtance to them from abroad; on the credible, though happily falſe, intelligence of our being actually invaded; on the ſafe retreat of our domeſtic enemies into the north, to join, as it was affirmed and believed, with foreign ſuccours there; on our ſecond diſappointment in battle, a fatal one it might have proved; on the continual dangers, to which that heroic prince was expoſed, whoſe preſence and conduct, and courage and activity, were ſo eſſentially neceſſary for animating our diſpirited troops; on the reaſſembling and ſucceſſes of our foes, after a ſeeming deſpondency and diſperſion; on the largeneſs of their numbers, the advantages of their ſituation; and laſtly, on the ſtrong report of what was but too poſſible, a complete victory obtained by them, when indeed one had been obtained over them, of which we were ignorant. Had we not often, during this period, *the ſentence of death within ourſelves?* Were we not *troubled on every ſide; without were fightings, within were fears* *; *mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things which were coming on the earth* †? And had we been aſked, at ſome junctures eſpecially, as the prophet was, in language akin to that of the text, *Can theſe dry bones live?* Can this exhauſted nation riſe up again, and ſhake off the preſſures, from every quarter, under which it labours? What other reply, at beſt, could we have made than his? *O Lord God, thou knoweſt* ‡. For ſurely the wiſeſt of men did not know; nor could the braveſt anſwer for the event, after it had been ſo frequently contrary to what we thought the moſt rational expectations. Of this only there was certainty, that we had the loudeſt call to adopt the pſalmiſt's prayer: *O God, thou haſt caſt us off, and ſcattered us; thou haſt alſo been diſpleaſed: O turn thee unto us again. Thou haſt moved the land, and divided it: heal the breaches thereof, for it ſhaketh* ‖. And praiſed be his name, that we can now add the words which

* 2 Cor. vii. 5. † Luke xxi. 26.
‡ Ezek. xxxvii. 3. ‖ Pſal. lx. 1, 2.

which follow thoſe: *Thou haſt given a token for ſuch as fear thee, that they may triumph becauſe of thy truth* *.

And we have accordingly triumphed in this comfortable earneſt of proſperity, returning to us after ſo long an abſence, with a joy as cordial and univerſal as perhaps this nation ever expreſſed. May both our friends and our enemies know it, and draw the natural concluſions from it, to the encouragement of the former, the diſmay of the latter! But then, if we *triumph* only for the ſafety of our perſons and properties, and not *becauſe of God's truth*, and pure religion; if we rejoice, and overlook the author of our joy, *the giver of all victory*, we ſhall fall inexcuſably ſhort of our duty, and the example ſet us by the apoſtle; who ſubjoins immediately to his account of the danger which he had eſcaped,

II. A thankful mention of his defender from it: *God who had delivered, and did ſtill deliver him.*

It is evidently both as eaſy for the Supreme Being, and as worthy of him, to govern the univerſe, as to create it. Indeed the only purpoſe for which divine wiſdom could create it, muſt be to conduct every part of it to a right end: and the ſmalleſt parts are no more beneath his attention than the greateſt; for he is infinitely above all. What reaſon thus teaches, holy ſcripture confirms, with important additions; informing us, that a future day is appointed for the full and final diſplay of his juſtice and goodneſs towards the children of men; but that, in the mean time, his providence is active, ſo far as the conſtitution of things eſtabliſhed by him permits; and not the leaſt occurrence comes to paſs, without the ſuperintending care of *our Father which is in heaven* †. We are often indeed ignorant by what means he acts; for he is able to influence, unperceived, not only the courſe of inanimate nature, but the minds of rational agents, and to produce the greateſt events from the ſlighteſt occaſions. We are often equally ignorant of his views in acting; for *we know but in part* ‡; whereas *all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do* §. The imperfection of our diſcernment, therefore, muſt be no hindrance to our faith; but our plain duty is to reverence implicitly thoſe proceedings

* Pſal. lx. 4. † Matt. x. 29. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. § Heb. iv. 13.

proceedings of his, the manner and grounds of which are hid from us; as well as to pay him more particular acknowledgements on account of ſuch as we underſtand.

For in many caſes the hand of God is clearly viſible; but nowhere more than in the correction, and yet preſervation of *ſtates profeſſing his holy and eternal truth* *; as indeed there cannot be on earth fitter objects of his righteous providence. Thus in all ages he hath watched over his church. Thus more eſpecially he hath treated this church and land ever ſince the reformation: *viſiting our offences with the rod, and our ſin with ſcourges; nevertheleſs his loving kindneſs hath he not utterly taken from us, nor ſuffered his truth to fail* †. *Many a time have they fought againſt me from my youth up, may* Iſrael *now ſay; yea, many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up, but they have not prevailed againſt me. The ploughers have ploughed upon my back, and made long furrows: but the righteous Lord hath hewn the ſnares of the ungodly in pieces* ‡. And ſurely in the troubles which we have undergone of late, a pious and thoughtful mind may trace evident footſteps of divine interpoſition. Why elſe, on the one hand, did our enemies increaſe, prevail, and eſcape ſo ſurpriſingly, for ſo long together? Why, on the other, did they ſo unaccountably miſs the faireſt and moſt palpable opportunities of undoing us effectually; neither purſuing at home the advantages they had gained, nor procuring the ſuccours which their friends abroad in all prudence ought to have ſent them? And why, laſtly, have they allowed us to obtain ſo deciſive a victory, in a few moments, at the expence of ſo little blood loſt on our ſide (would God their own, poor deluded wretches, could have been ſpared), when both from the encouragement of their preceding ſucceſſes, and the neceſſity of exerting themſelves to the utmoſt in this criſis of their fate, a very obſtinate engagement was to have been expected? Whence have theſe things happened thus, but that *God ruleth in the kingdom of men* ‖? *The Lord maketh the devices of the people to be of none effect, and caſteth out the counſels of princes. But the counſel of the Lord ſhall endure*

7 *for*

* Office for *November* 5. † Pſ. lxxxix. 32, 33.
‡ Pſ. cxxix. 1,—4. ‖ Dan. v. 21.

for ever, and the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation. Bleſſed are the people whoſe God is the Lord Jehovah; and bleſſed are the folk that he hath choſen to be his inheritance *.

Let us learn, therefore, and acknowledge, for it is a very bad ſign if we are unwilling, that both our dangers and our deliverances are from above. This will in no degree leſſen the guilt of our enemies; for they were prompted by their own wickedneſs unjuſtly to attempt what Heaven, for our wickedneſs, might juſtly have permitted. Nor can it ever be a plea for yielding tamely to their enterpriſes, that God makes uſe of them to ſerve his purpoſes. We know not the extent of thoſe purpoſes; which he will certainly execute, as far as they extend; and are therefore to do our evident duty. If he ſuffers our adverſaries to attack our moſt valuable rights, he both empowers and commands us to defend them; and they who conſider themſelves as his inſtruments for this end, will act with unſpeakably more faithfulneſs and zeal than ſuch as are induced by worldly motives alone; which frequently other worldly motives, and ſometimes very trifling ones, may outweigh; whereas there is no counterbalance to a principle of conſcience. Nor doth it in the leaſt detract from the merit of our ſoldiers and commanders, that *the ſalvation of the righteous cometh of the Lord, who alſo is their ſtrength in the time of trouble* †. Every pre-eminence is more eſtimable for being his gift; every great action for being done by his guidance: and the higheſt of thoſe who have wrought this deliverance for us, are ſurely the moſt deeply ſenſible, that the nobleſt of their diſtinctions is being employed by their Maker, and fellow-workers with him, for the ſupport of genuine religion, virtuous liberty, and public happineſs. This way of thinking will inſpire the moſt compoſed moderation, along with the moſt undaunted bravery; and whoever makes it the baſis of his conduct, will be entitled to all demonſtrations of reſpect from men, and yet abundantly contented with *the honour that cometh from God only* ‡.

Every thing that befalls us, therefore, adverſe or proſperous, let us look on it as proceeding from the juſt and good pleaſure

* Pſ. xxxiii. 10, 11, 12. † Pſ. xxxvii. 40. ‡ John v. 44.

pleaſure of our heavenly Father; humble ourſelves before him in all our afflictions; and, which is our preſent concern, be thankful to him in all our rejoicings. *If the Lord himſelf had not been on our ſide, let* Iſrael *now ſay, if the Lord himſelf had not been on our ſide, when men roſe up againſt us, they had ſwallowed us up quick, when they were ſo wrathfully diſpleaſed at us; yea, the waters had drowned us,—the deep waters of the proud had gone over our ſoul. But praiſed be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a prey unto their teeth* *. This is the language that expreſſes the truth of our caſe; and it is of infinite importance that we own it unanimouſly. For the Sovereign diſpoſer of the Univerſe will neither be denied nor forgot, without vindicating the glory of his name: and he hath long ago pronounced the ſentence: *They regard not in their mind the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands; therefore ſhall he break them down, and not build them up* †. But the duty and the neceſſity of ſuch regard will more diſtinctly appear, by conſidering

III. The reaſons for which the apoſtle was firſt brought into danger, then brought out of it: that he might learn by the former *not to truſt in himſelf*, and by the latter *to truſt in God, which raiſeth the dead.*

Now, if there was need of improving St. *Paul* in this leſſon, much more is there of teaching it others. And never, perhaps, was any nation, at leaſt which made profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, ſo deplorably inattentive to it as ours. Our wealth, our fleets, our valour, have been, for many years paſt, till very lately, our continual boaſt. And in vain had the ſcripture forewarned us: *Curſed is he that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm, and whoſe heart departeth from the Lord* ‡. How then ſhould God convince us of ſo pernicious an error; and ſhew us, that we were not ſufficient of ourſelves? By the very method which he hath taken. *He hid his face, and we were troubled* ‖: Storms roſe around us; and the moſt dangerous, where we thought there was nothing to produce any: our navy produced no protection; our valour ſunk into panic terrors; our *riches* were on the point of *making themſelves wings, and flying away* ¶; a general bankruptcy

* Pſ. cxxiv. 1,—5. † Pſ. xxviii. 6. ‡ Jer. xvii. 5.
‖ Pſ. civ. 20. ¶ Prov. xxiii. 5.

ruptcy threatened us; and what the *kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed, the adversary and the enemy were* near *entering into the gates of Jerusalem* *. Who could possibly have apprehended, that the landing of six or seven men should have put this great nation into such confusion? Who could ever have conceived, that the disturbers of our peace should have multiplied and conquered as they did; should have advanced and retreated, and ranged at will through our land, with so perfect security, for so long a time? And what is all this, but a call from God to know ourselves, and abase our pride before him; a practical declaration, *that no flesh shall glory in his presence* †?

But necessary as this instruction is, yet singly it is not enough. When irreligious persons have found by experience, that they cannot rely on their own strength, they have no other left to rely on; and so are tempted to despair in their minds, to fail in their duty, to seek refuge in cowardly and treacherous artifices for their own preservation. But very different are the sentiments of the pious man's heart. Let ever so unexpected calamities happen, let ever so alarming dangers approach, with ever so little appearance of surmounting them, still he knows, that nothing can be so dangerous, as to desert the post in which God hath placed him; and that *he who is faithful unto death, shall receive a crown of life* ‡. At the same instant, therefore, that he saith, *There be many that fight against me, O thou Most Highest*, he is enabled to say also, *nevertheless, though I am sometime afraid, yet put I my trust in thee* ‖. And this is the spirit which God intends to excite, by sending, after extreme perils, remarkable and sudden deliverances. From these it is natural to learn faith in him *that raises the dead*, that restores from the most helpless condition; and since *he hath delivered*, to form reviving hopes that *he will yet deliver*; which we may and ought to do now. He hath given us a victory speedier, cheaper, completer, than we could even have flattered ourselves with. He hath given it by the means of a young prince, whose confessed abilities, vigilant attention, unwearied diligence, and intrepid firmness, on all occasions, as well as his wonderful suc-

* Lam. iv. 12. † 1 Cor. i. 29. ‡ Rev. ii. 10. ‖ Ps. lvi. 2, 3.

ceſs on the preſent, afford us the juſteſt ground of perſuaſion, that he is choſen by providence for the ſervice and ſupport of his father, his family, his country. And the ſame God, who hath *begun to ſhew his mighty hand**, can, with the ſame eaſe, accompliſh his good work, and bring it to perfection.

But then, alas! what avails it that he can, unleſs we have cauſe to truſt that he will? And whence ſhall we have this? Thankfullneſs for paſt mercies undoubtedly is the way to ſecure future. And juſt now we ſeem in earneſt thankful. But if our gratitude prove to be ſuperficial and ſhort-lived, like that of the *Jews: They ſang praiſe unto him: but within a while they forgot his works, they would not abide his counſel*; what can we expect elſe, than judgments like theirs? *Then he lift up his hand againſt them, to overthrow them*†. Our ſtate, though vaſtly altered for the better, is ſtill a very undeſirable, indeed a very melancholy one. Our burthens are unavoidably augmenting, and our ſtrength waſting. Foreign force may ſoon renew our inteſtine commotions; or even, without their intervention, ſubject us all directly to itſelf. The failures of our friends give us, year after year, new reaſon to ſay with the pſalmiſt: *O be thou our help in trouble; for vain is the help of man*‡. *Put not your truſt in princes, nor in any child of man; for there is no help in them. Bleſſed is he, that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whoſe hope is in the Lord his God*§. But we cannot hope for the continuance of his protection, unleſs we anſwer the intention of it; which the nature of the thing, as well as holy writ, aſſures us is, *that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may ſerve him without fear*‖. It is not then, that we may ſin againſt him without fear: that we return ſecurely to the follies and vices, the impiety and profaneneſs, from which we abſtained, while his hand lay heavy upon us. Then we profeſſed to obſerve days of faſting and prayer. And what was the language of them? "Spare us, good Lord, that we may "ſafely go on to be as bad as we have been, and worſe?" Surely not. Some indeed expreſſed, even in the midſt of danger, an open ſcorn of them: others were evidently kept from

* Deut. iii. 24. † Pſ. cvi. 12, 13, 26. ‡ Pſ. lx. 12.
§ Pſ. cxlvi. 2, 4. ‖ Luke i. 74.

from it by mere outward decency. Many however were awakened, ſpoke and thought ſeriouſly, reſolved well, prayed heartily. But are they not moſt of them already, or ſhall we not find them ſoon, relapſed again into their own neglect? For ſuch hath always been the courſe of human nature, unleſs carefully reſtrained by conſcientious vigilance. *When he ſlew them, they ſought him, and turned them early, and inquired after God; and they remembered that God was their ſtrength, and the High God their Redeemer. Nevertheleſs, they did but flatter him with their mouth, and diſſembled with him in their tongue. For their heart was not whole with him; neither continued they ſtedfaſt in his covenant* *. After this feint of reformation, they grew, as men always do, wickeder than before. And I beg you attend to the final conſequence. *When God ſaw this, he was wroth, and took ſore diſpleaſure at Iſrael: He delivered their power into captivity; and their beauty into the enemy's hand* †.

If therefore it be aſked, what we ſhall do to ſhew our thankfulneſs acceptably, the anſwer is plain: *Walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs* ‡; but practiſe thoſe with more eſpecial zeal, which either our circumſtances particularly require, or our hearts tell us we have particularly tranſgreſſed.

Common prudence is one part of our duty, which we have unaccountably ſlighted. We have encreaſed amuſement and gaieties to a degree unexampled, juſt when providence hath called us moſt loudly to thoughtful conſideration. We have encreaſed expenſiveneſs to an equal degree, when perhaps our own fortunes, but certainly thoſe of multitudes, whom our example tempts, and often almoſt forces to imitation, are incapable of bearing it. And both theſe indiſcretions have produced perſonal miſeries and national inconveniences without number. We have diſregarded, and affect to diſregard, the care of our families, and the proper buſineſs of our ſeveral employments, though ſometimes perhaps important ones, not only to indulge our appetites, but to gratify our caprices: Behaviour in every rank and ſtation, fruitful of miſchief; but in the higher, of moſt dreadful and extenſive miſchief. In

* Pſ. lxxviii. 34, 37. † Pſ. lxxviii. 60, 62. ‡ Luke i. 6.

matters of national concern, we have followed our private intereſts, reſentments, friendſhips, inſtead of truth, and right, and general good. We have framed and ſupported uſeleſs and hurtful diſtinctions and diviſions; and been unjuſtly vehement in mutual reproaches, till our enemies were encouraged to fancy, that one half of us was ready to join them. We have vilified our governors, till we had almoſt diſowned the bleſſings of government; and it was very near being too late, that our affection to an eſtabliſhment on which our whole happineſs depends, revived, after an indifference, that foreboded immediate ruin. Let us never forgot more what we have been ſo ſeaſonably convinced of now; but always eſteem as highly our laws and liberties, and the auguſt houſe that ſecures them, as we did in that hour, when the hazard of loſing them was moſt imminent. But let us amend in every other point alſo; and while there is yet *ſpace to repent* *, become a ſober-minded, frugal, induſtrious, honeſt, and united people. For we cannot elſe continue a free one; neither the juſtice of God, nor the connections of human affairs will permit it.

Theſe then are fundamental rules of private prudence. With thoſe of public wiſdom we have no concern here, beyond two particulars. The firſt is, our obligation to pray, that God would incline thoſe who are in authority over us, to conſider ſeriouſly what have been the cauſes of our troubles, and direct them to proper remedies: would enable them to preſerve, both in puniſhments and precautions, the true medium between too great ſeverity and too great indulgence: would inſtruct them, how to reconcile all that wiſh well to the community; and how to prevent others from renewing any more our ſufferings, or their own. The ſecond is, our conſequent obligation to diſtruſt our own judgment, rather than theirs, in matters of ſuch difficulty; and to uſe our faithful endeavours, that what they determine may become effectual.

But how rightly ſoever we are diſpoſed in theſe reſpects, if we continue to entertain the ſame contempt of religion, which we

* Rev. ii. 21.

we have manifeſted for a long time paſt, it is in vain to *truſt, that God will* continue to *deliver us*, How much, or how little forbearance he may exerciſe, cannot be ſaid; but ſooner or later, *except we repent, we muſt periſh* *. For, let us think of it or not, he is the ruler of the world; and he will approve himſelf to be ſuch, by inflicting on thoſe, who ſlight him, the vengeance they deſerve. Indeed, could we leave them to themſelves; as *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom* †, ſo caſting it off is the inlet of folly. Religious motives are the only ones, that can, in all caſes, either prompt to what is right, or reſtrain from what is wrong, with ſufficient force; and when this tie is broken, no other will hold. Reaſon plainly ſhews it; ſcripture hath repeatedly foretold it; the experience of all ages confirms it; and there is no room left for us to carry the trial further, without utter deſtruction. We have been ſinking for a great while, in proportion as we grew vicious and profane, till at laſt we were plunged in the very depth of diſtreſs. Once more, however, after ſeeming quite rejected, we have received a kind encouragement. But if we let judgments and mercies both be loſt upon us, what can there remain, but final ruin?

Think then with yourſelves, why ſhould we not now return to God? Gratitude is a generous principle of action; and he hath furniſhed us with an opportunity for it. Hope is a nobler one than fear alone. And who can tell, what hope there may be yet for this nation, would we but apply to our offended Father with virtuous penitence? He can raiſe us friends where we leaſt expected it, and change the hearts of our bitterest adverſaries. For *he reſtraineth the ſpirit of princes, and is wonderful among the kings of the earth* ‡. *When the ways of a man pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him* §. But if their enmity continues, he can check, he can break their power at its very height; and *ſtrengthen the hands* ||, direct the counſels, proſper the undertakings of his people; ſo that *no man ſhall be able to ſtand before them* ¶. *For his is the greatneſs, and the glory, and*

* Luke xiii. 3. † Pſ. cxi. 18. Prov. ix. 10. ‡ Pſ. lxxvi. 12.
§ Prov. xvi. 7. || Neh. vi. 9. ¶ Joſh. i. 5.

and the victory, and the majesty : For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor amongst the nations† . Let it be thy pleasure, O Lord, to help us. Let all those that seek thee, be joyful and glad in thee : and such as love thy salvation say alway, The Lord be praised‡.*

* 1 Chron. xxix. 11. † Psal. xxii. 28. ‡ Psal. xl. 16, 19.

SER.

SERMON CXXIII.

(Preached *October* 9. 1746, on the Day appointed for a General Thankſgiving for the ſuppreſſion of the Rebellion.)

ON THANKFULNESS FOR NATIONAL MERCIES AND DELIVERANCES; AND THE GREAT DUTY OF A VIRTUOUS OBEDIENCE ON ACCOUNT OF THEM.

JOHN v. 14.

Afterward Jeſus *findeth him in the temple, and ſaid unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: Sin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.*

AFTER ſeven yearly faſts, we have now, through God's mercy, before we have deſerved it, one day of general thankſgiving: and ſurely our concern is to employ it ſo that we may hope for more. Now, there can be no wiſer or kinder direction for this purpoſe, than that of our Lord in the text. He had juſt healed the perſon to whom he ſpeaks, and therefore certainly did not mean to uſe him harſhly in theſe words, but indeed to ſhew him ſtill greater goodneſs than he had done already, as much greater as ſpiritual and eternal welfare is than temporal. His cure had been the heavieſt of his misfortunes to him, had he behaved improperly upon it. But *Jeſus found him in the temple*, whither probably he went with a devout heart, to give God praiſe. This promiſed well concerning him; yet by no means rendered a ſtrong warning to him ſuperfluous. Permit me, therefore, finding you, and God be thanked that I find ſo many of you, in the temple on a like occaſion, to treat you in a like manner. And think it not ſtrange, I beſeech you, if at preſent you hear not ſolely

the voice of joy, though never was a juſter occaſion for it, but are exhorted, even now, to *ſerve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto him with reverence* *. I hope many teachers of his word will dwell this day on the ſame ſubject; for the advice here given by our gracious Maſter, comprehends every thing that our condition requires.

I. A thankful ſenſe of the bleſſing which we have received. *Behold, thou art made whole.*

II. A firm reſolution of virtuous obedience in return for it. *Sin no more.*

III. A prudent conſideration of the danger of behaving otherwiſe. *Leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.*

I. A thankful ſenſe of the bleſſing which we have received. *Behold, thou art made whole.*

At this time laſt year, and for many months after, we had a very afflicting ſenſe of the judgments that threatened us; the whole nation had it, and with the utmoſt cauſe. Our religion, our liberties, our lives, our public independence, our private properties, were all at ſtake. Our forces were few, unſucceſsful, and diſheartened; the rebels were numerous, flushed with victory, and increaſing. Then, beſides what appeared, we knew not how much more evil we had to apprehend, from abroad or at home, from the fury of our enemies, from the coldneſs of our friends. The danger too was no leſs imminent than great; and muſt ſoon cruſh us, if not ſoon averted. We ſaw, and felt, and trembled at it; we exerted ourſelves againſt it, with a ſpirit never known amongſt us before: and God forbid we ſhould have forgotten, God forbid we ſhould ever forget, the impreſſions that we had ſo lately, firſt of the terrors impending over us, then of the felicity of their ſudden diſperſion.

It is true, we are not yet perfectly *whole*. Far from it, Heaven knows. But what would we have given once for ſo happy an approach towards it as we now poſſeſs? Our domeſtic foes are fallen in battle, or cut off by juſtice, or driven into other lands, or abſconding in corners of their own, impoveriſhed and diſarmed, and taught by experience neither to rely on themſelves nor their faithleſs allies. Our ſoldiery have

* Pſal. ii. 11.

have recovered their ancient courage and character. The nation in general hath united in active loyalty; we are known and truſted one by another; known and dreaded by our adverſaries, who had ſtrangely miſtaken our inteſtine diviſions, bad as they were, for ſomething much worſe. Our diſtemper is at leaſt expelled from our vitals, and driven to the extreme parts. We have notice, we have time, to provide againſt a return of it; and poſſibly at preſent *France* may be feeling from us, in her own dominions, a ſmall ſhare of the ſufferings which ſhe projected for ours, while we are enjoying in peace all that we feared to loſe. Whatever we may want, therefore, to make our happineſs complete, we ought to be moſt deeply ſenſible, that our portion of it is remarkably large; ſo large, that there is not ſurely a nation upon earth, with which any one of us, in the midſt of all that we have to complain of and lament, would be willing on the whole to change conditions.

But then, as often as we conſider to how comfortable a degree we are *whole*, we ſhould always recollect by what means we were *made whole*. Our Saviour was not afraid the poor man, whom he had cured, ſhould forget that he had regained the uſe of his limbs, but how he had regained it. And if he, who had been miraculouſly healed, yet had need of being reminded to whom he owed his health, much more ſhould we, who have been ſaved by the ordinary methods of providence, be careful to fix it in our hearts whence the ineſtimable benefit was derived. And here let us allow their full proportion of praiſe, even to the human means; to the juſtice and mildneſs of his majeſty's government, and the proſpect of continued ſecurity and tranquillity under his deſcendants; bleſſings which the riſk of loſing excited the moſt vigorous efforts for preſerving; to the valour, the prudence, the vigilance, the activity of his illuſtrious ſon; to the bravery and indignation thus inſpired into his officers and troops; to the unexampled unanimity, zeal, and liberality of his faithful ſubjects, the nobility, the gentry, the clergy, the commonalty of the realm. Let us ever acknowledge our obligations to the merits of all theſe. But ſtill let us remember, that men are only inſtruments in the hand of the Almighty. We have owned this all along by our prayers: let us own it ſincerely

in our thankſgivings alſo; and not receive, without ſuitable gratitude, what we begged with ſuch uncommon earneſtneſs. It is juſt as true at this hour as it was then, that *except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain**. From his diſpleaſure came our danger, from his compaſſionate goodneſs our deliverance. *Therefore deſpiſe not* either *the chaſtenings* or the mercies *of the Almighty. For he maketh ſore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole*†. It cannot be leſs criminal towards God than men; it is unſpeakably more, to aſk aſſiſtance, and when we have had it, not acknowledge it. He doth not indeed want our acknowledgments, but he hath ſtill an equal right to them; and that he requires them not for his own ſake, but for ours, is ſurely no reaſon why we ſhould withhold them.

But you will ſay, "We do acknowledge God's mercy in "delivering us, and will never deny it." But if after a while you never think of it more, you might almoſt as well deny it. Or if you think of it, and are not moved by it, that is worſe than forgetting it. Or ſuppoſe you have ever ſo warm a feeling of his favours, yet if you refuſe to make a proper return for them, this is worſt of all. And what return doth he demand? Some hard and unnatural, or expenſive and ruinous ſervice? No: the moſt reaſonable thing in itſelf, and the moſt beneficial to us and our fellow-creatures, that poſſibly can be: what the text expreſſes,

II. A firm reſolution of virtuous obedience. *Behold, thou art made whole: ſin no more.* God hath been gracious to you; be dutiful to him. Sin is at all times equally abſurd and ill-deſerving. It is ſetting up our own perverſe will againſt the authority of our Maker and Sovereign Lord; our own paſſions and caprices againſt the wiſdom of our heavenly Father; thinking that we can proſper in oppoſition to the Almighty; or if not, preferring rebellion and miſery to fidelity and happineſs. But to ſin on, directly in the face of diſtinguiſhing mercies juſt vouchſafed, this is the moſt ſhocking aggravation of the worſt thing in the world; a crime ſo heinous, that perhaps you may reſent being thought bad enough to need a caution againſt it. But the impotent man, whom our

* Pſal. cxxvii. 2. † Job v. 17, 18.

our Saviour healed, was not, that we know, a ſinner beyond others: and, therefore, could we of theſe nations truly ſay, that we are not ſuch neither, ſtill the caution given him would be a ſeaſonable one to us. We have at leaſt ſinned enough to deſerve what we have ſuffered, which is more than a little. And had we deſerved nothing farther, yet, as *Elihu* remarks in the caſe of *Job*, *Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have borne chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more* *.

But to ſee how far ſuch advice is neceſſary for us, it will be requiſite not to keep in generals, but deſcend to particulars. And they muſt be ſuch as relate to each of us in our private capacities: for I am not ſpeaking now to bodies of men, or to ſingle perſons in high ſtations. May God beſtow plentifully on all ſuch, grace to conſider what the warning, *ſin no more*, directs them to, while we conſider what it directs us to! And I apprehend the preſent occaſion calls upon us to avoid, for time to come, four kinds of ſin eſpecially: to diſregard religion no more; to miſbehave towards our rulers no more; to encourage party-diſputes and contentions no more; to indulge extravagant pleaſures and amuſements no more.

1. To diſregard religion no more. Perhaps this is the nation upon earth where it is regarded the leaſt (our neglect of God's worſhip in our churches, our families, our cloſets; the impious talk, the infidel books, that abound every where, afford lamentable evidence of it), though we have confeſſedly the greateſt bleſſings to incline us to be religious, and the moſt rational inſtruction how to be ſo. Notwithſtanding this, who is there amongſt us, of any age, who doth not perceive how much commoner and opener both indifference and profaneneſs are grown within his own time, within a ſmall part of it? Who was there amongſt us lately, of any thought, that did not ſtrongly fear we were become ſo entirely unconcerned about the matter, that even Popery would have had no terrors for us? God be thanked it hath proved otherwiſe. And permit me to add, let them be thanked alſo, by whoſe long deſpiſed and reproached labours, a ſpirit of piety had ſtill in ſome meaſure been kept alive: and by whoſe earneſt and ſeaſonable exhortations, an unexpected degree of Proteſtant zeal

* Job xxxiv. 31.

was principally raiſed. Do us the juſtice then to bear it in mind, that you wanted our help, and you had it. The enemies of the government avowedly hate us for what we have done; if its friends will not love us for it, our caſe is hard indeed. But, however you think of us, learn at leaſt to think of the religion we profeſs, as the trueſt ſupport, indeed as an eſſential part, of our happy eſtabliſhment. Not that preſerving it for political purpoſes alone will be at all ſufficient: they who aim at no more, will come ſhort even of that. God will diſappoint them, men will ſee through them, and infection will ſpread from hypocriſy, as well as profligateneſs, though not quite ſo faſt, yet till at length the whole frame is corrupted and deſtroyed.

You may plead, that however profane the nation may be, we are anſwerable each for himſelf only. But indeed, ſo far as our behaviour can properly influence, we are anſwerable beyond ourſelves. Do we then endeavour to diſcountenance irreligion, and encourage ſerioufneſs in thoſe who belong to us, in thoſe with whom we converſe? Do we, as our Saviour hath enjoined us, *confeſs him before men* *? Or do we not on many occaſions outwardly appear *aſhamed of him*, while inwardly our hearts condemn us for it?

But were we to anſwer for ourſelves alone, what anſwer could we give? We are as good as others perhaps. And what if others be very bad? Will that excuſe us from being what the word of God, and our own conſciences, tell us we ought to be? If not, are we indeed ſuch? Is concern for our future happineſs, is reverence and love of God, the great principle within our breaſts? Do we really love him the better for theſe very mercies, for which we are now met to praiſe him? We hope ſo perhaps. But what proof have we given of it, by ſerving him better ſince? And if none, while the motive was freſh upon our minds, what is to be expected afterwards, unleſs the preſent call awaken us, as heaven grant it may?

2. The next point of inſtruction is, to miſbehave towards our rulers no more. The connexion is inſeparable, *Fear God; honour the king* †. *For by him kings reign, and princes rule;*

* Matth. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. † 1 Pet. ii. 17.

rule; nobles, and all the judges of the earth *. For which reaſon we are to reſpect, not only the perſon of our ſovereign, but, to uſe the apoſtle's words, *all that are in authority* †. For without a number of ſuch, government cannot be adminiſtered. And profeſſions of duty to him, with unjuſt bitterneſs againſt thoſe whom he intruſts, and cauſeleſs oppoſition to the meaſures they adviſe, betray either groſs inſincerity, or pitiable weakneſs, or an impetuoſity of temper, that ſhould be better governed. This however doth not reſtrain thoſe, to whoſe rank or office it belongs, from uſing the faithful, though poſſibly ſometimes unpleaſing, freedom of giving ſuch counſel, or propoſing ſuch laws, as public-ſpirited prudence appears to direct. Nor doth it reſtrain any one from expreſſing, in a proper manner, his opinion of whatever public meaſures may conſiderably affect him, or the whole, provided he hath ground to think himſelf a judge of them. But it ought to reſtrain all perſons from being vehement, and judging harſhly, where perhaps they are unqualified to judge at all: from indulging ſuch behaviour, ſuch language, or even ſuch notions, as are injurious to governors, or hurtful to the ends of government; as may excite or cheriſh diſloyalty, or unreaſonable diſſatisfaction, or barely promote unconcernedneſs about thoſe, whom providence hath ſet over us.

How far we have been guilty of theſe things, it is much fitter that each one ſhould think ſeriouſly for himſelf, (for it is a very ſerious matter) than that any one ſhould take upon him to tell others, eſpecially from this place. I ſhall only ſay therefore, that every ſort of perſon may have been guilty; ſome by wrong compliances, and abuſe of power and favour; ſome by ill-founded complaints and reſentments; all by diſguiſing ſelfiſh views under plauſible pretences. But whoever the criminals are, the crime is very great. Not only thoſe in authority ſuffer by it, when they ought not, which alone is grievous injuſtice, but the community in general ſuffers deeply with them. The wrong things of this kind, which are ſaid and done, give the ill-deſigning dreadful advantages againſt their ſuperiors; and hurry the inconſiderate, even they who mean well, into wildneſſes almoſt incredible. Nay, the

* Prov. viii. 15, 16. † 1 Tim. ii. 1.

the wiſe and good are inſenſibly cooled and alienated by them. And then is the juncture for attempting to overturn a conſtitution. We have felt this, and therefore we ſhall be inexcuſable, unleſs we remember it; remember to *abſtain from all appearance* * of undutifulneſs; to *keep our mouths with a bridle, while the wicked* or the weak *are before us* †; on no occaſion to expect more from our rulers, than we juſtly may from human creatures like ourſelves; to bear it patiently, if our moſt equitable expectations are not always anſwered; and *accept* and acknowledge *every worthy deed they do*, and ſurely they have done many, *with all thankfulneſs* ‡. Acting thus, very probably, might have prevented the late rebellion, and may prevent another.

3. A further caution, cloſely connected with the preceding, is, to encourage party contentions no more. For they always break in, and uſually to a high degree, be it ever ſo undeſigned at firſt, on the reſpect owing to our governors. Or could that be avoided, one ſide will be tempted to patroniſe, for the ſake of popularity, what they know, or eaſily might know, is wrong; to oppoſe what is uſeful, or even neceſſary; to conſtrue the worthieſt and wiſeſt conduct unfairly; to prefer the ſupport of their cauſe before the ſervice of the public; to imagine or pretend, that the prevalence of it will produce every deſirable effect; when both reaſon and experience demonſtrate, that little, if any, good is like to follow from it, and poſſibly much harm. The other ſide, in return, are tempted to reject what they ought to forward; to inſiſt on what they ought to give up; to oppreſs their adverſaries by ſuperior power; to accuſe them of being what they are not, till perhaps they provoke them into being what they would not be. And on both ſides theſe diſputes engage men's principal attention, to the neglect of their common welfare; drive them into doing bad actions, and countenancing bad perſons; make foreign friends afraid to rely upon us; and both foreign and domeſtic enemies bold to enterpriſe againſt us. Their late enterpriſe was chiefly founded on our diviſions; which neither they, nor indeed we, could have imagined would have ſuffered us to unite againſt them ſo ſoon, and

* 1 Theſſ. v. 22. † Pſal. xxxix. 1. ‡ Acts xxiv. 2, 3.

and ſo heartily, as we did. God be praiſed, who inclined our hearts to it: but let us *ſin no more*. Each party ſees, that the other have ſinned; each might ſee, that they have ſinned themſelves: both muſt ſee that the event was nearly pernicious; let us take warning for the future.

But it will be of ſmall advantage not to oppoſe one another, if we all agree in behaving amiſs; and therefore,

4. The laſt caution is, to indulge extravagant pleaſures and amuſements no more. It is but too viſible, how much, living entirely to trifles and follies, hath encreaſed in the upper part of the world; and madneſs for diverſions and entertainments, even in the middle and lower; together with moſt profligate intemperance and debauchery in the loweſt of all. Now vicious indulgencies are deſtructive to our temporal, as well as our ſpiritual intereſts; to the health and ſtrength, that ſhould labour and defend the public; to the honeſty and regularity, that ſhould ſecure private peace and comfort. Merely imprudent gratifications, by devouring time and money, as they do beyond imagination, deſtroy induſtry, and propagate poverty; which, we muſt be ſenſible, is making yearly frightful advances upon us. And when wickedneſs is inſtigated by neceſſity, the worſt of conſequences may juſtly be apprehended. Thoſe of mean rank are then fully ripe for any miſchief: and what miſchief might we not have dreaded from them ten months ago, had providence permitted the rebels to reach our capital? Perſons of better condition, when diſtreſſed, will too often ſacrifice every other conſideration to the urgent one of ſupplying their wants, real or fancied; prefer their own preſent profit, ſometimes a trifling profit, before the common ſafety; heighten groundleſs diſcontents, to take advantage of them; nay, join in rebellion itſelf againſt their conſciences, of which we have lately had a moſt remarkable example, and ingenuous confeſſion *. May it prove an uſeful preventive!

A further great evil is, that immoderate lovers of pleaſure will of courſe favour the vileſt wretches who contribute to their entertainment, and too frequently depreciate the worthieſt

* See *Foſter*'s account of the behaviour of the late Earl of *Kilmarnock*, after his ſentence, p. 6, 7, 10, 11, 41.

thieſt character, if it be a grave one; whence proceed inconveniences without number. But were this deſpicable inclination hurtful no otherwiſe, it would be extremely ſo, by taking off the mind from application to things of moment. Even in perſons the leaſt conſiderable, indolence and inattention to their proper buſineſs, may have extenſive bad effects: and when it grows general among ſuch, it ſenſibly impoveriſhes and weakens, and tends to ruin a nation. But they who are intruſted with matters of importance, may, not only by a ſeries of neglect, but by the ill-timed indulgence of an idle humour for a day or an hour, cauſe irretrievable miſchief to a ſociety, that hath purchaſed and depends on their beſt vigilance and induſtry; which therefore are due to it, not only in point of honour, but of indiſpenſable moral obligation in the ſight of God.

Theſe, I apprehend, are the chief particulars in which we ſhould learn, from being made whole, to ſin no more. And every one ſhould apply them to examine and direct himſelf, not to inveigh againſt others; and remember, that the utmoſt punctuality and zeal, in ſome parts of his duty, will not be accepted as an atonement for tranſgreſſing or overlooking any of the reſt.

III. The laſt general head comprehended in the advice of the text, is, a prudent conſideration of what may follow, if we diſregard it: *Sin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee.* Perhaps we may think that nothing worſe can come. And ſo, perhaps, thought the poor man, to whom this was ſaid firſt; for his illneſs had been a very deplorable one. Yet our Saviour gave him the warning; and let us take it alſo. Whoever goes on to offend, after receiving ſignal mercies, is plainly a greater ſinner; and let him not doubt but God can ſend him a heavier puniſhment, even in this world, and make *his laſt ſtate worſe than the firſt* *. Indeed, ſhould only what we have already felt return upon us, the tenderneſs of a wounded part will augment both the fear and the pain. And how little probability of it ſoever we diſcern, as one dreadful danger hath grown up out of nothing, ſo may a dreadfuller of the ſame nature. Our ſins, if we amend not,

2 will

* Matth. xii 45.

will enfeeble and divide us yet more: our inteſtine foes may take new courage; our foreign ones may ſupport them better; God may refuſe entirely *to go forth with our hoſts* *; and any thing may have any effect that he pleaſes. Hitherto we have only been waſhed by the waves; the next time we may ſink under them; that ſurely would be worſe. And they who have now ſuffered ſo much from us, would with reaſon become vaſtly more formidable to us, were they to ſucceed hereafter, than if they had ſucceeded lately.

But where is the impoſſibility, that without the help of enemies at home, the powerful and inveterate one which we have abroad, may enſlave us ere long immediately to itſelf; and that without granting even the ſhort reprieve to our religion, liberties, and properties, which perhaps from the former we might hope? Our only defence againſt both is in God's good providence; and our only ground of truſt in that is, if we *ſin no more*. For freſh provocations, it muſt be expected, will bring on ſeverer judgments. Let us often recollect then, that he, who hath delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, can full as eaſily deliver us into it; and if he doth not, ſtill hath us continually in his own. Every thing terrible, fire, famine, peſtilence, waits on his orders. At this inſtant we are ſuffering heavily by the laſt, though hitherto confined to our cattle: but how much longer and more general a ravage it may make amongſt them, or to what other ſpecies of creatures it may extend at length, and whether not to our own, which of us can ſay?

But indeed, without any other ſcourge at all, ſin alone, by the natural conſequences which Heaven hath originally annexed to it, is able to ruin us very completely. Contempt of God and our duty may overturn on a ſudden, but muſt undermine gradually, in proportion as it prevails, every bleſſing that we enjoy; fill every family with diſorders and diſtreſſes; aboliſh mutual faith and confidence; open a wide door to fraud and force; defeat the execution of juſtice; make our envied conſtitution ineffectual to its great ends, and turn all the good of it into evil; *till we are able to bear*, as was the

* Pſal. cviii. 11.

ancient complaint in like circumſtances, *neither our diſeaſes, nor their remedies* *. The more immorality ſpreads, the deeper root it ſtrikes; the difficulties of checking it increaſe; the numbers and vigour of thoſe who endeavour to check it leſſen. Some diſtempers, by the fermentation which they excite, work their own cure: but wickedneſs is a gangrene, which deſtroys the part it ſeizes; and, if it approaches towards being univerſal, muſt end in death. External force, like an acute diſeaſe, though for a time it bears down all before it, may ſtill, by the vigour of nature, be thrown off unexpectedly; but an internal principle of diſſolution, that hath corrupted the whole maſs of humours, admits no relief.

Or ſuppoſe a ſinful nation, either by ſtopping ſhort of the extremity of ſin, or by an uncommon delay of divine juſtice, neither of which can reaſonably be expected, were to eſcape temporal ruin ever ſo long, yet there will be *a worſe*, an infinitely *worſe thing*, *come* without fail, and that very ſoon, to every ſinner in it, the final vengeance of God in the next life; which will be, as it ought, peculiarly ſevere on thoſe who *deſpiſe the riches of his forbearance and long-ſuffering; and will not know, that his goodneſs leads them to repentance* †.

I am very ſenſible, that this may appear a comfortleſs, an intimidating manner of ſpeaking to you, and exceedingly unſuitable to ſo joyful a ſolemnity as the preſent. But why then will not all who hear me, why will not this whole land reſolve on that amendment, without which no true comfort can be adminiſtered to them? Relieve us then from the neceſſity, for we muſt deal faithfully with you, of ſaying on thankſgivings juſt the ſame terrifying things that we do on faſts. It would afford us the higheſt delight to omit them on both; to ſet before you only pleaſing views, and deſcribe your condition in the language of the Pſalmiſt: *Happy are the people who are in ſuch a caſe; yea, bleſſed are the people who have the Lord for their God* ‡. It is entirely your own fault that motives of fear are ever mentioned to you. Our gracious Maker hath furniſhed us plentifully with a much better ground of obedience, by the numerous mercies which we

* Liv. Hiſt. Præf. † Rom. ii. 4. ‡ Pſal. cxliv. 15.

we have long enjoyed, and ſtill continue to enjoy. Think but a little of the natural advantages of this iſland; of the civil, the ſpiritual privileges that have diſtinguiſhed it for ages, and what requitals they deſerve: think but how complicated a bleſſing this laſt deliverance is; and labour to be induced, as much as you can, by the bounties of God to ſerve him. But let us be conſcious alſo, that our imperfection, our depravity, needs awe, as well as love, to move us; and uſe the joint efforts of both, to produce in our ſouls that filial ſorrow, and penitent return to duty, which will prove the inlet, and is the only one, to all manner of conſolation.

They that thus *ſow in tears*, are entitled to *reap in joy* *: *their mouth may be filled with laughter, and their tongue with ſinging* †: they may with propriety not only give, as they are bound, the more ſerious demonſtrations of pious gratitude, but indulge every lighter expreſſion of a cheerful heart, that innocence and prudence allow. Outward rejoicings for mercies, without inward concern for unworthineſs, and fixed reſolution of virtuous improvement, is an abſurd and inſolent, and will be a ſhort-lived triumph. *Praiſe is not ſeemly in the mouth of a ſinner; for it was not ſent him of the Lord* ‡. But when humble and hearty devotion hath preceded, gladneſs and exultation, kept clear of exceſs and riot, may and ſhould follow on occaſions like this. The grief of our offences ſhould be loſt, for the time, in a thankful ſenſe of God's goodneſs; a cheering hope be entertained, that *he, who hath delivered, will deliver* §; and our behaviour ſhew to all around us what our hearts feel. This was the direction immediately given to the *Jews*, when once they had been made ſenſible of their tranſgreſſions, in their public aſſembly for a thankſgiving, on their return from the captivity: and I conclude with reciting it. *The Levites read in the book, in the law of God, and gave the ſenſe, and cauſed them to underſtand the reading. And all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the prieſt, and the Levites, that taught the people, ſaid unto them, This day is holy unto the Lord your God: mourn not, nor weep. Go your way,*

* Pſal. cxxvi. 6. † Ver. 2. ‡ Ecclus. xv. 9. § 2 Cor. i. 10.

*eat the fat, and drink the ſweet, and ſend portions unto them, for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye ſorry, for the joy of the Lord is your ſtrength. And all the people went their way, to eat and to drink, and to ſend portions, and to make great mirth; becauſe they had underſtood the words, that were declared unto them**.

* Neh. viii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12.

SER.

SERMON CXXIV.

(Preached on a General Faſt.)

WHEREIN PUBLIC HAPPINESS CONSISTS;—HOW WE ARE TO EXPRESS OUR REGARD OF IT;—AND THE ADVANTAGES WHICH FLOW FROM THIS EXPRESSION.

PSALM cxxii. 6.

O pray for the peace of Jeruſalem: *They ſhall proſper that love thee.*

GOD hath planted in the hearts of men, and it is a ſtrong proof of his goodneſs to us, a principle of tender mutual benevolence, which reaſon enjoins us to exert on all occaſions; and revelation both threatens our tranſgreſſion of this rule with the ſevereſt puniſhments, and encourages our obſervance of it by promiſes of the moſt effectual aſſiſtance and nobleſt rewards. But as all mankind is an object too large for the generality of perſons to embrace in their affections, and for the reſt to think of actually benefiting; the ſcripture hath very juſtly appropriated our *love* to *our neighbour*; to every one who is any way brought near enough to us, to be capable of receiving any ſervice or mark of kindneſs from us, according to our Saviour's moſt rational explication of that term *. And each nation of the world being only a more extenſive neighbourhood of perſons combined together, under one head, for common advantage, the views of the ſeveral members of it may well reach thus far, but ordinarily ſcarce farther. And therefore

* Luke x. 29, &c.

therefore love to our country hath been ever conſidered, not merely as an important and excellent virtue, which it always is, when genuine and judicious; but as filling the whole compaſs of reciprocal duty, which it uſually doth, provided we proportion it rightly to the various relations, which we bear to each perſon in the ſociety. Now this is the affection, which the pſalmiſt ſo warmly recommends in the text: *Peace* being well known to ſignify, in holy writ, all ſorts of proſperity; and *Jeruſalem* being the centre of unity of the *Jewiſh* people, both in religious affairs and civil. *For thither the tribes went up, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord; and there was the ſeat of judgment, even the ſeat of the houſe of* David *.

During the latter part indeed of the time, that their government ſubſiſted, they had moſt of them a zeal for their country, which excluded charity towards the reſt of mankind. But this was a corruption, not a precept of their religion. For no law of any other nation ever enjoined ſo ſtrictly both juſtice and mercy to ſtrangers as theirs; though it did provide againſt needleſs intercourſe with them, to prevent imitation of their evil cuſtoms. It is true, they were commanded to extirpate the inhabitants of *Canaan*. But theſe were grown to ſuch a height of monſtrous idolatry, unnatural luſts, and ſhocking barbarities, as the wiſdom of God ſaw to be incurable. And he choſe the *Iſraelites* for *his miniſters, revengers to execute wrath upon them* †, that they might learn to abhor what they had been employed to puniſh. This done, their commiſſion expired; for it reached to no other nation. And in fact, they were as quiet neighbours to the Heathen round them, and as dutiful ſubjects to their *Chaldean*, *Perſian* and *Grecian* maſters, as any other people. Nor did the text more plainly require them to *pray for the peace of* Jeruſalem, than the prophet *Jeremiah* doth, *to ſeek the peace of the city, whither they were carried captives, and pray unto the Lord for it* ‡.

We need not therefore ſcruple to imbibe love of our country from the ſacred writings of the *Jews*; and much leſs have we cauſe to imagine, as ſome would perſuade us, that this is a virtue not preſcribed to Chriſtians. It is true, that as the *Romans* had long been ravaging the world, and the *Jews* in our Saviour's days were evidently ruining themſelves; both of

* Pſal. cxxii. 4, 5. † Rom. xiii. 4. ‡ Jer. xxix. 7.

of them prompted to what they did by a narrow-minded and unjuſt vehemence for their national intereſt and honour: he earneſtly recommended, as it was neceſſary, not the particular paſſion, of which they had already too much; but the general diſpoſition, which they wanted, of good will to all men. For that is the only ſure foundation of ſocial behaviour; and while it reſtrains perſons effectually from doing any thing wrong in favour of their country, will incite them powerfully to do every thing right. In teaching this doctrine therefore, and indeed throughout his whole conduct, he ſhewed the kindeſt and wiſeſt regard to his undeſerving fellow citizens; for whom, ill as he was treated by them, he fully appears to have had the moſt affectionate concern. Witneſs his tears and pathetic expoſtulations: *O* Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, *thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not* *. *If thou hadſt known*, or as it rather ſhould be tranſlated, *O that thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things, which belong unto thy peace* †. Witneſs again his peremptory command, even after he had been crucified there, *that repentance and remiſſion of ſin ſhould be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at* Jeruſalem ‡. The ſame heroic ſympathy his great apoſtle St. *Paul* expreſſes, after the ſevereſt uſage, in the ſtrongeſt manner, *for his brethren, his kinſmen, according to the fleſh*, declaring ſolemnly before *Chriſt and the Holy Ghoſt, that he had great and continual ſorrow and heavineſs in his heart* on their account §. He hath not indeed exhorted the Chriſtians, whom he favoured with his epiſtles, to the love of their ſeveral countries: for they were all under one dominion, and deſigned by providence to remain ſo. He hath not exhorted magiſtrates to ſtudy the welfare of thoſe, over whom they preſided; for there were no believing magiſtrates; and it might have been deemed preſumptuous, and ill intended, if he had laid down directions for others; or foretold explicitly ſo ſoon, that the goſpel would come to have authority on its ſide. But he hath ſufficiently, though obliquely, intimated to rulers, what their office requires of them; and urged private

* Matt. xxiii. 37. † Luke xix. 41, 42.
‡ Luke xxiv. 47. § Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3.

private ſubjects moſt convincingly and awfully to ſuch behaviour, as will render communities quiet and flouriſhing.

Love of our country therefore is an undoubted Chriſtian duty. And we ſhall both be directed and encouraged in the performance of it, if we conſider, as the text leads us,

I. Wherein the public welfare conſiſts.

II. How we are to expreſs our regard to it.

III. What advantages will flow from expreſſing it as we ought.

I. Wherein it conſiſts. Now plainly the happineſs of any ſociety is that which the perſons who compoſe it, do or may enjoy in it. And therefore wide extent of dominion contributes nothing to the happineſs of a ſtate; for ſuch unweildy bodies are ſeldom or never kept long in good health. Much leſs is military glory the point to be had in view, any farther than is needful to ſecure a peaceable poſſeſſion of all important national rights. For ſuch a purpoſe, war is lawful; and they who hazard their lives in it, worthy of high honour. But in all caſes it is accompanied with dreadful evils; of which we are apt to conſider the heavy expence, as if it were the only one; and forget the ſufferings, and miſerable deaths, of ſuch multitudes of human creatures, though every one of them is a murder, committed by the authors of this calamity; beſides the innumerable diſtreſſes of relations and friends, the devaſtations, inhumanities, and wickedneſſes of every kind, which never fail to be its attendants. Then if the event of all ſhould turn, as God grant it always may, to the diſadvantage of the aggreſſors, here is much miſchief brought on their neighbours, only to bring more on themſelves. Or ſuppoſe their ſucceſs be ever ſo great, the injury done by them will be great in proportion: they will receive little real good from it, and have paid very dear for that, even in this world; and in another, God will take effectual care, that no one ſhall have cauſe to rejoice in having broken his laws, and uſed his creatures ill.

The next pre-eminence commonly imagined to conſtitute the proſperity of a ſtate, is that of wealth, and its uſual ſource, commerce. Now, undoubtedly riches are a valuable inſtrument, both of common defence, and ſeparate enjoyment: but then they are alſo a dangerous incentive to luxury and debauchery;

bauchery; by which perſons grievouſly diſtreſs themſelves, their families, their acquaintance, the public, in many ways, alas! but too well known. And many, whom affluence doth not immediately ſeduce into groſs vices, it leads, however, to indolence and ignorance, to the admiration of trifles and follies, and thence to the neglect, and afterwards the contempt and ridicule, of virtuous and prudent conduct. This wrong taſte being once formed, high honours and pompous appearances are thought neceſſary by ſome; the idleſt gratifications and vanities by others; the means to procure and ſupport them muſt be found; and when their incomes fail, as the largeſt, with ſuch management, will fail, they muſt ſupply the defect by any baſeneſs or iniquity that they can; at leaſt any ſuch as general practice, in a time of general corruption, makes a ſhift to keep in tolerable countenance. This example in the upper part of the world, is followed of courſe by the lower; their induſtry leſſens, their expences increaſe, their principles are depraved, they and their families ruined; they ſeek for relief in fraud, violence, or intemperance, and plunge themſelves by each deeper in miſery. Even of the regular and diligent, the home labour is much of it employed on things uſeleſs or hurtful; the foreign trade in importing ſuperfluities. This procedure muſt as neceſſarily impoveriſh the public, as it muſt any ſingle perſon, or number of perſons; for the whole number of them is the public. And in ſuch circumſtances, whatever preſent ſhew of ſtrength and plenty there may be, is fallacious; like the over-full and florid look of a diſeaſed body, cauſed by a too indulgent regimen; and under the ſuperficial appearance of redundant health, betraying to the ſkilful evident ſymptoms of the moſt fatal diſtempers, already begun, if not far advanced.

Another thing, conſtantly and juſtly mentioned as a main ingredient in political happineſs, is liberty; an invaluable privilege, but often miſunderſtood, and ſtill oftener abuſed. Abſolute liberty, to do what we will, is abſolute power. If one alone, or a few, have this, the reſt are in ſlavery; if all have it, the whole muſt be in confuſion. Liberty, therefore, in order to preſerve it, muſt be reſtrained by law, in whatever caſes the exerciſe of it may affect others. And regulations by authority are neceſſary, not only to prevent mutual

encroachments, but to aſcertain each perſon's claims and expectations; and to inſtruct every one what he is to do, and what to avoid, for the common benefit. Now, legal proviſions for theſe ends ought to be juſt and equitable, ſuited to the ſtate of things known and fixed. And thoſe which a nation makes for itſelf by its choſen repreſentatives, are ſo very much the moſt likely to have theſe properties, that living as we do, under a conſtitution purpoſely contrived for making, on every occaſion, ſuch as we want, is the greateſt of civil bleſſings, provided we turn it not, by our fault, into a curſe.

But to prevent this, beſides care and impartiality in framing laws, there muſt be a general obſervation of them, elſe they were enacted in vain. Even ſuch as are in their nature the moſt variable, muſt be obſerved while they laſt. For not only the total neglect of them will fruſtrate their beneficial intent, and open a door to yet worſe irregularities, but the partial, beſides having this unhappy effect in its degree, will introduce a very dangerous kind of inequality: good ſubjects muſt be loſers by their obedience, and bad ones gainers by their tranſgreſſion.

Still more eſſentially doth the common welfare conſiſt in the practice of ſuch rules of conduct as are in themſelves, and therefore always obligatory: in abſtaining from violence, fraud, promiſcuous lewdneſs, intemperance, extravagance; in performing carefully the proper buſineſs of our ſeveral ſtations; in providing diligently what is needful for ourſelves, and thoſe who belong to us; in relieving the poor with prudent bounty; in behaving with reſpect to ſuperiors, with condeſcenſion to inferiors, with friendlineſs to equals, with peculiar affection to thoſe whom either nature or voluntary ties have united to us more cloſely. Theſe are the main things on which ſocial happineſs depends. A nation may be ſmall, and weak, and poor, and yet the perſons who compoſe it may enjoy their beings very comfortably. But however great, and powerful, and rich it is, folly and wickedneſs will bring miſery on each particular; which, put together, is general miſery; and will beſides gradually weaken and diſſolve the whole. For the principal ſupports of a ſtate confeſſedly are, the numbers, and health, and ſtrength, and induſtry, and

probity, and concord, of the ſeveral members of it; all which good morals promote, and bad undermine.

But as human laws, in multitudes of inſtances, cannot puniſh, and much leſs prevent, the breach of moral obligations, the chief ſecurity of regard to them, in any ſociety, muſt proceed from reverence of the divine laws. And as the precepts of Chriſtianity are vaſtly more determinate, accompanied with communications of far greater moral powers, and enforced by ſanctions of unſpeakably ſtronger terror to ſinners, and ſweeter conſolation to pious minds, than the dictates of nature, unaſſiſted by revelation, eſtabliſhing a practical belief of the goſpel, is ſecuring and completing the proviſion for national felicity. This will, in all caſes, reſtrain men from what is wrong, animate them in what is right, make them eaſy and happy under every ſuffering. Beſides, profeſſion of the ſame faith and hope, and participation of the ſame worſhip and ſacraments, muſt give ſo peculiar a ſacredneſs and endearment to the bonds of civil union, that zeal in the common cauſe of our country and our religion, at once, will be intrepidly active, and indefatigably perſevering *. *For my brethren and companions ſakes, I will wiſh thee proſperity; yea, becauſe of the houſe of the Lord our God, I will ſeek to do thee good* †. Then to all the advantages flowing naturally from piety, we cannot doubt but God will ſuperadd his bleſſing, and withhold it from the profane; for his own words are, *Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed* ‡. Nor muſt a further conſideration ever be omitted, for it is a very important one; that unleſs true religion be cheriſhed and practiſed, falſe religion will inſinuate itſelf and prevail. For the mind of man muſt have ſome, as the experience of all ages proves, and our own particularly; amongſt whom the increaſe of infidelity is accompanied with that of Popery; an evil which ought to be highly formidable to us; as it muſt of courſe, if ever it gain power enough, not only overturn our preſent happy eſtabliſhment, but introduce the cruelleſt tyranny over the ſouls, and bodies, and eſtates of men.

* Dion. Halic. Ant. Rom. l. ii. c. 23. † Pſal. cxxii. 8, 9.
1 Sam. ii. 30.

Having now ſeen wherein the public welfare conſiſts, we ſhould all with great ſerioufneſs conſider

II. How we are to expreſs our regard to it. The manner preſcribed in the text, according to our tranſlation, is, *Praying for the peace of* Jeruſalem; according to others, Aſking or inquiring concerning its peace. Both imply having it much at heart. And whatever we have deſervedly at heart, ought jointly to engage our watchful ſolicitude, and our earneſt petitions. I ſhall now begin with the firſt.

Pretences to public ſpirit, if they are not ſincere, uſually cover hurtful deſigns. Therefore we ſhould examine ourſelves cloſely, for ſelf-deceit is wonderfully frequent, *of what ſpirit we* indeed *are* *: whether private paſſions or intereſts, concealed under ſpecious appearances, do not influence our diſcourſe and behaviour, perhaps our very thoughts. And, ſo far as we have need to know, we ſhould make the ſame inquiry concerning others alſo; forming our opinions of them with charity, yet with caution. But ſuppoſing the common good be ever ſo really our object and theirs, unleſs we underſtand well the tendencies of things, we may do it irreparable harm, inſtead of furthering it; and therefore ſhould always be, according to St. *James's* admirable direction, *ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, ſlow to wrath* †: impartially diligent to learn the truth, where it is our buſineſs to judge and act; backward to meddle where it is not; reaſonable and moderate in all matters. But let us conſider our duty more diſtinctly, in relation to the ſeveral articles that were ſpecified under the preceding head.

As defence againſt enemies is an eſſential ingredient in public happineſs, rulers are bound to provide for it with vigilance, and ſubjects to contribute to it with cheerfulneſs; far from repining at neceſſary burdens, though heavy ones. But we ought to oppoſe with double vigour, from principle as well as intereſt, the deliberate, and habitual, and perfidious, and inſolent diſturbers of mankind; yet always remembering, that the only lawful aim, even in the juſteſt war, is an equitable concluſion of it. *The Lord give ſtrength unto his people; the Lord give his people the bleſſing of peace* ‡!

Again:

* Luke ix. 55. † James i. 19. ‡ Pſal. xxix. 10.

Again: as national wealth, and private plenty of the conveniencies of life, are deſirable in communities, but luxury and extravagance deſtructive to them, all perſons, in their ſtations, ought ſo to promote the former, as to diſcourage the latter at the ſame time; which they will do moſt ſucceſsfully, by ſetting examples to others of decent frugality, and attention to their own affairs; by honouring worthy characters, though in mean circumſtances; and expreſſing, in every proper way, diſlike and contempt of baſeneſs, debauchery, profuſion, admiration of undeſerving things, neglect of important ones; be they, who are guilty of ſuch faults, ever ſo diſtinguiſhed by their rank or accompliſhments.

Further: as liberty is a bleſſing of ineſtimable value in ſociety, it ought to be aſſerted with the utmoſt reſolution and watchfulneſs, not only againſt open aſſaults, but every practice, that may ſecretly and ſilently impair it; yet with religious care, neither to *uſe* it, nor unwarily aſſiſt others to *uſe* it, *for a cloak of maliciouſneſs* *; nor hazard the deſtruction of it, by attempts of improving it to a viſionary perfection. Therefore power, in a requiſite degree, muſt both be allowed and diligently ſupported: They, in whoſe hands it is placed, muſt both be obeyed and humbly reſpected, *not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake* †; even the ſubordinate, much more the ſupreme; their whole conduct muſt be viewed with modeſty and candour; their good actions and intentions acknowledged with due thankfulneſs; their miſtakes and failings, imagined or real, borne with that mildneſs, of which we have all need to excuſe our own. And the ſame equitable temper ſhould always be preſerved between private perſons, one towards another; were their differences about public affairs of ever ſuch moment, whereas they are frequently nominal or trifling; and were they ever ſo ſure of being in the right, whereas poſſibly both of them have reaſon to diſtruſt it. This is the method, and it is the only one, by which we can ever hope to ſee *Jeruſalem built as a city, that is at unity in itſelf* ‡.

Further yet: as good laws, and the obſervation of them, are neceſſary to the public welfare; all, who have a ſhare in legiſlature,

* 1 Pet. ii. 16. † Rom. xiii. 5. ‡ Pſal. cxxii. 3.

legiſlature, ought to contrive or aſſent to ſuch, and oppoſe others, without ſuffering any conſideration to bias them; al magiſtrates ought to execute them with uprightneſs and courage, yet with humanity; and all ſubjects, to obey them diſintereſtedly, and procure obedience to them zealouſly.

But the laws of morality require peculiar attention for our country's good, as well as our own. Every perſon, who tranſgreſſes theſe, *teaches* his neighbour, *teaches* his family, *an evil leſſon againſt himſelf* *, in points of the greateſt conſequence. And every government, which connives at ſuch tranſgreſſions, when it can ſafely puniſh them, connives at the ruin of the people intruſted to its care. But eſpecially every free government, guilty of ſo culpable remiſſneſs, be it to court popularity, be it to ſerve what preſent turn it will, undermines the only ground it hath to ſtand upon. For without virtue, liberty cannot ſubſiſt.

Nor indeed without piety can virtue ſubſiſt. For our good affections are ſo weak, our bad inclinations ſo vehement, and the temptations of the world ſo numerous and enticing, that we need every poſſible preſervative. And evidently the fear of God is the moſt awful reſtraint from doing ill: and the love of God the moſt delightful inducement to do well. True religion therefore muſt be eſtabliſhed by the authority of the legiſlature, but with the tendereſt regard to ſcrupulous conſciences; and upheld in reputation by the countenance and example of the great. Its miniſters muſt be induſtrious, and their ſuperiors muſt ſee that they are, in teaching and defending it, and adorning their doctrine by reſpectable and amiable behaviour. Its profeſſors muſt be aſſiduous attendants on its exerciſes in the congregation, and ſerious practiſers of its injunctions at home.

But particularly, in both places, they muſt be earneſt with God for their country's proſperity, and fervently *pray for the peace of Jeruſalem*. Many can do little elſe; but all can do ſo much for it. In ſome of our endeavours to ſerve the public we may err; in this we are ſure to be right. Often we know not, what is beſt for it; our heavenly Father always doth. Poſſibly in times of difficulty and danger we may be tempted

* Eccluſ. vii. 2.

tempted to deſpair of the commonwealth; praying for it will remind us, that its fate is not in the hands of men, but of the Almighty. In all times, reſentments, intereſts, prejudices, frequently blind and miſlead us; devout applications to heaven will compoſe our paſſions, purify our intentions, obtain us light to guide our ſteps, and enlarge our views. Perhaps we have been diligent enough, or more than enough, in the uſe of other means, conducive, as we imagined, to public good; but have never, humbly and heartily, uſed this. And yet, if we believe a righteous Judge of the world, we muſt ſurely believe, that he takes notice of the addreſſes, which his poor creatures, with pious affections, offer up to him. Or could we doubt it otherwiſe, we are fully aſſured of it in his ſacred word. Not that naming our wants informs him, or acts of ſervile ſubmiſſion delight him, or unfit importunities prevail on him; but that praying *in ſpirit and in truths* *, while it ſeems intended to influence him only, hath a powerful influence on us; and by ſtrengthening the ſenſe it expreſſes, how dependent we are on his mercy, and what qualifications are needful to obtain it, fits us at the ſame time to receive it, and grow better by it; whereas beſtowing his favours on thoſe, who are too negligent of him to aſk for them, might neither be ſuitable to the holineſs of his nature, and the honour of his government, nor indeed contribute to their final advantage. Why then ſhould not we addreſs ourſelves to the Lord of all, not in outward form only, but inward reality; not merely at diſtant ſeaſons appointed for it, like this, but every day of our lives; that he would graciouſly protect the community, of which we are members, and inſtruct and excite us to perform properly our duty towards it? His own declaration, even after he had promiſed a bleſſing, is, *I will yet for this be inquired of by the houſe of* Iſrael, *to do it for them* †. And the direction of his prophet is, *Ye, that make mention of the Lord, keep not ſilence, and give him no reſt, till he eſtabliſh, and till he make* Jeruſalem *a praiſe in the earth* ‡.

Affectionate vigilance therefore to do each his part for the ſervice of the whole, and conſtant prayer, that God would *proſper the* united *works of his hand* §, are the genuine demonſtrations

* John iv. 23. † Ezek. xxxvi. 37. ‡ Iſ. lxii. 6, 7. § Pſal. xc. 17.

monſtrations of that regard, which we owe to the public welfare. Let us now conſider,

III. What advantages will flow from expreſſing it in this due manner. *They ſhall proſper that love thee.* Worldly proſperity is deſigned to partake of the uncertainty of all worldly things; but, ſo far as any thing on one part can ſecure it, a virtuous and pious public ſpirit muſt. Princes, magiſtrates, teachers of religion, military men, private perſons of all ranks and profeſſions, who thus expreſs the love of their country, will be loved by it, and love one another. Such union will give them both the higheſt pleaſure, and the greateſt poſſible ſtrength: nothing will be done to betray or thwart the general intereſt, but every thing imaginable to promote it: they will be bold in dangers, perſevere through difficulties, furniſh mutual aſſiſtance at any hazard: allies will know they can truſt them; enemies will reſpect and dread them. Indeed they will have no enemies, but ſuch as oppoſe truth and right; and therefore, when they are driven to war, they will conſider themſelves as fighting the battles of God. But uſually they will enjoy peace, at home as well as abroad, and taſte the comforts of it without allay; each delighting in the other's good; each feeling the tranquillity, the wealth, the honour of the community, as his own; and rejoicing with humble thankfulneſs, that his ſhare in the production of it hath not been wanting. If ſuch happineſs be ſeldom ſeen, the reaſon is, that ſuch diſpoſitions towards it are ſeldom general. But let them be ever ſo uncommon, and affairs for want of them ever ſo unproſperous: whoever ſacredly preſerves them in himſelf, and faithfully exerts them when he can, *his ſoul ſhall proſper*, as St. *John* expreſſes it *: be filled with the conſolation, that he hath meant and endeavoured well, though ſurrounded with examples and temptations to the contrary; and that none of the calamities, that have happened, or may happen, can be laid to his charge. Were he to be entirely deſerted by other men, he would ſupport himſelf by our Saviour's reflection: *Behold, the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye ſhall be ſcattered, every man to his own, and ſhall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, becauſe the Father*

* 3 John, ver. 2.

*Father is with me**. Some, however, in the worſt of times, will probably bear witneſs to him on earth; but God will certainly look down upon him with approbation from heaven, and bleſs him with a pleaſing conſciouſneſs of his favour, the foretaſte of future reward.

Let us now, on the other hand, contemplate the effects, I do not ſay of downright ill-will to the public, which few perhaps can be wicked enough to harbour knowingly, but of indifference, and preferring other conſiderations to its advantage. If perſons, in ſtations of truſt, ſupreme or ſubordinate, regard empire, abſolute power, profit, pleaſure, indolence, as their felicity; inferiors will in proportion be ſacrificed, oppreſſed, exhauſted, neglected. If theſe inferiors are principally intent on their own private gratifications of any kind; even where they have no ſhare in the government, they will hurt it by ſerving it remiſsly or unfaithfully, and be miſerable by unwilling ſubjection. But where the government is mixed, and divided between the ſovereign, the nobles, and the repreſentatives of the commonalty; as it cannot be carried on at all in that form, without profeſſions, on every ſide, of a patriot ſide; ſo in the degree, in which theſe profeſſions are falſe, there will be a wide door open for ſupine miſmanagement, ſelfiſh projects, corruption, treachery; the vileſt of men will ſhelter themſelves under plauſible appearances and favourite names, and be ſupported by parties, which they have artfully raiſed or careſſed. At the ſame time, they, who think they have the tendereſt love for their country, perhaps will find, on reflection, that in truth they love only the faction, in which they have liſted; or though it be their country, if they have not had tenderneſs enough for it, to examine coolly what conduct its intereſts require, they may accelerate its ruin, by increaſing the fierceneſs of contention, and lending the reputation of their good meaning to colour over the bad deſigns of others. Free nations therefore, as they are the happieſt beyond compariſon, if the general advantage be the general object; ſo they are peculiarly uncomfortable, and expoſed to danger from within and without, if diviſions inflame men

* John xvi. 32.

one againſt another, or the attention of each be confined to himſelf.

Still the *wiſe in their generation* * may imagine, that however impoſſible it be for the whole to proſper without the mutual affection of the parts, they ſhall proſper the better for throwing off a principle, that will be always interfering with their intereſts or inclinations. But they cannot attempt to throw it off, or even contradict it in a ſingle inſtance, without ſeverely condemning themſelves in their hours of recollection. Or if they could, they will be detected, in ſpight of all diſguiſe, and abhorred by others, and moſt by the worthieſt; which gives the hardeſt hearts much greater uneaſineſs, than they are willing to own. Beſides, through the mercy of providence, their wicked ſchemes often fail of anſwering their ends; and firſt to do wrong, and then be diſappointed of their aim in it, is double ignominy. Puniſhment alſo not uncommonly overtakes even the ſecureſt criminal. But ſuppoſing the ſelfiſh wretch to ſucceed, that ſucceſs will tempt or provoke many more to imitate him in hurtful deſigns and unfair methods. If they act in oppoſition to him, he may ſuffer, as he deſerves, by the example he hath ſet; if they act in conjunction with him, ere long ſomewhat will diſunite them. Or however, bad precedents naturally produce worſe, and ſo they multiply continually; till at laſt the authors and encouragers of miſchief are in their turn involved in it. But were they to eſcape for life, yet their poſterity, whoſe advancement perhaps is the main point, which they have in view, muſt partake, it may be largely, in whatever the commonwealth is brought to ſuffer; beſides the hereditary diſgrace of ſpringing from ſuch anceſtors. And, if ill people of every rank would conſider, what figures their predeceſſors in wickedneſs make now in daily talk, and are likely to make hereafter in hiſtory, if they be of conſequence enough; and in how very different a light men of probity are ſeen, when the tranſient miſts, that artifice, prepoſſeſſion and reſentment have raiſed, are diſperſed; ſurely it muſt have a beneficial influence on their conduct.

Or,

* Luke xvi. 8.

Or, if none of theſe conſiderations can affect them, there is yet another of infinite moment. This life, at beſt, is ſhort; and moſt of the buſy actors on the ſtage of the world have probably but a ſmall part of it to come, before a ſtrict account of their behaviour in it is demanded. And will it be well for us then, think we, that, for the ſake of purpoſes not to be owned, we have brought unjuſt reproach, uneaſineſs, diſtreſs on our brethren; and diſquieted, weakened, impoveriſhed, undone our common parent, whom nature and reaſon and revelation jointly require us to love and to ſerve? Or muſt it not be inexpreſſible happineſs, for thoſe in low ſtations to have diſcharged the duties of them with faithful affection, both to their rulers and their fellow-ſubjects; and for thoſe in the higheſt to be able to ſay, with the excellent *Jewiſh* governor, *Think upon me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people* *.

If theſe be ſolid motives, let us all be moved by them: firſt, to uſe the utmoſt caution, that we do no harm to our country; next to try, what ſervice we can do it; but eſpecially to endeavour, for that we every one of us can, by virtuous lives, united hearts, and fervent prayers, to call down the Divine Benediction on our national counſels and undertakings. If indeed we conſider worldly appearances only, we have great cauſe to fear; if we reflect on our many heinous iniquities, we have ſtill much greater cauſe. But when we call to mind, what deliverances God hath often and lately beſtowed on us, what warnings and what time he hath given us to repent, how ſlow and unwilling he appears to let our enemies proceed to our total deſtruction, it cannot but kindle in our breaſts a moſt reviving perſuaſion, indeed *a full aſſurance of hope* †, that would we but yet be unanimous and religious, we might yet by his bleſſing be ſafe and proſperous. And may *the Lord ſo bleſs us, that we may ſee* Jeruſalem *in proſperity all our life long* ‡: *but let them be confounded and turned backward, as many as have evil will at* Sion §.

* Neh. v. 19. † Heb. vi. 11. ‡ Pſal. cxxviii. 6. § Pſal. cxix. 5.

SERMON CXXV.

(Preached *April* 25. 1749, on the Thankſgiving for the Peace.)

ON THE BLESSINGS OF PEACE.—THEY ARE THE GIFT OF GOD.

PSALM xxix. 10.

——*The Lord ſhall give his people the bleſſing of peace.*

WE are met this day to thank God for a mercy, that hath long been the object of our earneſt wiſhes and ſolemn prayers; that we have often had but ſmall hope of obtaining, and yet now have poſſeſſed many months with an increaſing proſpect of its continuance: on which account our joy is ſtill more reaſonable, though it muſt, from the conſtitution of our nature, be leſs warmly felt than it was at firſt. Accordingly we have juſt been expreſſing it in the divine preſence. And inſtruction from this place was not previouſly neceſſary to excite our gratitude for a benefit ſo viſible and ſo important. But it may contribute not a little to fix in our breaſts a more durable ſenſe of what we have acknowledged; and, which is the end of all, directs us to ſuch behaviour as will ſecure and improve the happineſs we enjoy.

I ſhall, therefore, at preſent,

I. Set before you the *bleſſing of peace*.

II. Shew you that it is the *gift of God*.

III. Preſs you to remember, that only *his people* are entitled to it; and, conſequently, to conſider whether we are ſuch; and to labour that we may in the higheſt degree.

I. I ſhall

I. I ſhall ſet before you the *bleſſing of peace*.

Man appears, from the harmleſs make of his body, the converſable diſpoſition of his mind, the tenderneſs of his affections, the ſovereignty of his reflecting principle, the neceſſity of aſſiſtance in his numerous wants, and the rules of life preſcribed him by expreſs revelation, to be formed for a ſocial inoffenſive creature. Now, the natural ſtate of each being is the happy one. And the happineſs of peace is like that of health; it ſpreads through the whole of the civil, as that doth of the animal conſtitution; and furniſhes vigour and pleaſure to every part, without being diſtinctly perceived in one more than another; for which reaſon we are apt to overlook the felicity of both, till the loſs of them for a time renews our ſenſe of their value; and even ſuch experience uſually doth not long preſerve it in our memory. Therefore, to diſcern ſufficiently the advantages of peace, we muſt recollect the miſeries of war.

To theſe we ſeldom attend farther than we immediately feel them. And the generality feel only the expence; which indeed is a ſore evil, and hath been for many years paſt, and muſt be for many to come, a heavy burden to us. Perſons of low degree are ſadly ſtraitened by it in their enjoyment of the common comforts and neceſſaries of life. Their ſuperiors, it is true, need only undergo a retrenchment of their ſuperfluities; which they might bear, if they would, without much uneaſineſs, or any harm. But as too many of them are pleaſed to reckon their grandeur and luxury, their follies and their vices, the moſt inſeparable privileges of their rank, they muſt, by retaining theſe, be diſtreſſed equally with others, when the demands of the ſtate are larger than ordinary. And as their uſual reſource is the very bad one, of ſupplying a fund for extravagance and immorality, by refuſing acts of piety, charity, and juſtice, they force multitudes round them to ſuffer with them and for them. Frequently, indeed, the load of taxes may not be the cauſe of this diſhonourable behaviour; but even then it is a plauſible pretence and excuſe for it. Nor doth the miſchief ſtop at particular perſons; but the public, exhauſted by payments, and ſunk under debts, becomes incapable of exerting itſelf, even for its own preſervation, when future occaſions require.

Yet,

Yet, melancholy as theſe things are, an article much more ſhocking, and which ought to be the firſt in our thoughts, is that of the various and continual toils and hardſhips that muſt be endured by ſuch numbers of poor creatures, expoſing themſelves in defence of others, through ſo long a courſe of time: the loſs of ſo many thouſands of lives by ſickneſs and in battle; the grief of ſo many relations and friends; the miſeries of ſo many deſtitute families; part of theſe our fellow-ſubjects; not a few of them poſſibly very dear to one or other of us; a ſecond part our allies; the reſt called indeed enemies; but, it may be, ſcarce any of them in fault for that enmity, how much ſoever their rulers are; and all of them, in truth, our brethren; of the ſame blood, and, in eſſentials, the ſame faith, though taught them with a mixture of dangerous errors.

Further ſtill: war not only weakens and afflicts a community in theſe reſpects, but interrupts the freedom of commerce, retards the propagation of knowledge, prevents uſeful improvements, takes of the public attention from domeſtic concerns, furniſhes occaſion for abuſes, obſtructs the remedy of inconveniencies, till they grow inveterate and hard to cure; in ſhort, diſorders and unhinges the whole ſyſtem of civil affairs. Then beſides, which is a vaſtly more alarming conſideration yet, all the time that hoſtilities laſt, who can tell how they may end? And had ours ended, as they eaſily might, in our being abſolutely overcome, and obliged to accept the victors terms, what would they have been?

But war is alſo a ſtate of no leſs wickedneſs than calamity and terror. Whenever it breaks out, one ſide, at leaſt, muſt have acted grievouſly contrary to humanity and juſtice; contrary too, in all likelihood, to ſolemn treaties; and that from no better motives than little reſentments, groundleſs or diſtant fears, eagerneſs of gaining unneceſſary advantages, reſtleſs ambition, falſe glory, or wantonneſs of power. To ſuch deteſtable idols are whole armies and nations deliberately ſacrificed; though every ſuffering, thus cauſed, is a heinous crime, and every death a murder. Nor will the ſide which at firſt is more innocent, fail in the progreſs to be guilty of many ſhocking tranſgreſſions in common with the other. The whole body of a people are apt to grow uncharitable, unpity-

ing,

ing, implacable; and the ſoldiery will plunge of courſe into cruelty, rapine, profaneneſs, lewdneſs, intemperance; not to add, that when the poor wretches have once changed the ordinary employments of life for this, they will be in great danger of never ſettling honeſtly and ſoberly to them again. Some of theſe things, to worldly or inconſiderate minds, may appear ſmall matters: but every benevolent, or merely prudent perſon, will eſteem them very great ones; and every pious heart will moſt ſeriouſly mourn, that *the worthy name, by which we are called, is blaſphemed among the Gentiles* *, through the ſins, and peculiarly the enmities, of thoſe who profeſs the goſpel, inſtead of its producing that *glory to God, peace on earth, and good will amongſt men*, whoſe angels proclaimed at our Saviour's birth †.

Still this dreadful evil, big with ſo many more, becomes, by the obſtinate iniquity of men, ſometimes unavoidable. It muſt be the will of the common Father of All, that ſocieties, as well as ſingle perſons, be reſtrained from committing material injuries, elſe deſtructive ones would be committed perpetually. Now, certainly amicable methods are to be tried in the firſt place: but often the only effectual method of reſtraint is by arms; and then *the miniſter of God*, the ſupreme power, *muſt not bear the ſword in vain* ‡. Often again, treaties made to ſupport allies, if unjuſtly attacked, are probable means of preſerving peace; and when that proves otherwiſe, the aſſiſtances promiſed muſt be given, in order to reſtore it. But above all, when a nation is directly attacked itſelf, defence is undeniably neceſſary. And our caſe, in the late war, was compounded of all theſe. We have therefore the comfort, that our undertaking it was juſtifiable; and our manner of carrying it on, I truſt, no way peculiarly blameable. But it could never be lawful to refuſe any equitable, any tolerable conditions of agreement, for putting an end to ſo much guilt and miſery. Whether thoſe which we have accepted are deſirable, is not a queſtion to be diſcuſſed here. You have decided it for yourſelves in the affirmative, by joining in this morning's ſervice; and the people in general have ſhewn their joyful concurrence in the ſame opinion. If ſome well-meaning

* James ii. 7. Rom. ii. 24. † Luke ii. 14. ‡ Rom. xiii. 4.

meaning and able perſons have thought otherwiſe, diverſities of judgments are always to be expected in ſuch matters; and if the ill-wiſhers to our happy eſtabliſhment are ſorry and angry, we have the more reaſon to be glad. Let us therefore proceed to obſerve,

II. That the *bleſſing of peace* is *God's gift*.

This will need only a ſhort proof; but requires a much more ſerious and practical conſideration, than we commonly allow it. Every enjoyment is from his bounty; every ſuffering his infliction. The whole ſeries of cauſes and effects, all the connections of all things, were originally appointed, and are continually ſuperintended by him. He brings forth, in each generation, ſuch perſons to act according to their own free choice, their various parts on the theatre of life, as he foreſees will anſwer, ſometimes by their great abilities and good diſpoſitions, ſometimes by the contrary, his holy purpoſes of judgment or of mercy. And the influence of this one arrangement on the reſtoration of our preſent tranquillity, may have been, and probably hath been, unſpeakably great. But be the tempers, qualifications, and deſigns of men what they will, he can, unperceived by themſelves, put thoughts into their minds, to incite, withhold, divert them to another object, juſt as he pleaſes. Then, beſides, the entire frame of inanimate nature, as it was produced, is alſo actuated by him; and he could, by its original formation, or can now by the ſlighteſt change in the ſmalleſt part of it, occaſion, obſtruct, alter to any degree, the moſt important events. And laſtly, the ſame wiſe and gracious motives, which induced him to make the world, muſt certainly induce him to be attentive to it. And the attention of an infinite mind muſt comprehend the regulation of every thing, even the ſmalleſt; but affairs of ſuch momentous conſequence, as peace and war, cannot fail to occupy a diſtinguiſhed place in the ſcheme of providence.

Theſe deductions of reaſon, our condition of late years hath obliged me more than once to lay before you; but ſtill they need to be inculcated. Paſſages of ſcripture too, confirming them, I have produced to you in great numbers; but it is very eaſy, and would to God it were not neceſſary, to add yet more. *I form the light, and create darkneſs; I make peace,*

and create evil; I the Lord do all theſe things *. *The heart of kings is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivulets of water: he turneth whitherſoever he will* †. *The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand* ‡. And on the contrary, *Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it* §?

Frequently indeed we perceive no marks of the interpoſition of God in what paſſes. But we are both inadvertent and ſhort-ſighted; ignorant, not only of the ſecret ſprings and material circumſtances of many human actions, but yet more, beyond compariſon, of principal purpoſes in the divine adminiſtration. Yet this however we know, that he is inceſſantly conducting the affairs of the preſent world, towards a full diſplay of his wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs, in the next; though often by ſteps inviſible to our eyes, and improbable to our imaginations. *For his judgments are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out* ||. Therefore in all things we ſhould believe a Providence; but in many we may ſee it: and very plainly in our own caſe, to whom true religion and liberty have been ſo wonderfully preſerved, in the midſt of ſuch imminent dangers; and quiet and ſafety ſo unexpectedly reſtored, when *the help of man was* confeſſedly *vain* ¶. Nor did God only beſtow the bleſſing, but it is he who continues it; and every day's peace, as well as every day's bread, is a gift from him.

Surely then we have cauſe, not for joy alone, but thankfulneſs too, from the bottom of our hearts. And if we ungratefully diſown, or negligently forget the author of our happineſs, what is it likelier, what is it fitter he ſhould do, than deprive us of it again? We may think, perhaps, that we have fully diſcharged our conſciences towards him by attendance on the preſent ſolemnity. And God grant we may hear, it hath been every where univerſally attended. But ſuppoſing, that outward acknowledgments ſingly are downright pageantry and mockery. Nay, inward ſenſe of obligation along with them, if it bring not forth ſuitable and laſting obedience, is imperfect, inefficacious, deluſive homage, which our Maker cannot

* Iſ. xlv. 7. † Prov. xxi. 1. ‡ Pſal. cxxi. 5.
§ Amos iii. 6. || Rom. xi. 33. ¶ Pſal. cviii. 12.

accept. *Herein is my Father glorified*, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour, *that ye bear much fruit* *. And thus we are to underſtand that awful denunciation: *If ye will not hear, and if you will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, I will ſend a curſe upon you, and I will even curſe your bleſſings* †. Accordingly the text very clearly intimates,

III. That to entitle ourſelves to *the bleſſings of peace*, we muſt be *his people*; own his authority by obſerving his laws.

The practice of religion and virtue makes nations induſtrious, frugal, rich, healthy, populous, unanimous, public-ſpirited, fearleſs; yet at the ſame time, juſt, prudent, friendly; which are the very qualities, that conſtitute them formidable enemies, deſirable confederates, inoffenſive neigbbours; and, ſo far as any thing can, will ſecure them peace. But wickedneſs impoveriſhes, enfeebles, diſpirits, depopulates, diſunites; extinguiſhes concern for common good, inflames ſelfiſh appetites and paſſions; renders men raſh and provoking, yet indolent and deſpicable. It ſeems hardly needful for providence to interpoſe, otherwiſe than it hath done in the original appointment of things, to exalt a people of the former character, or depreſs one of the latter. But when it is, we may expect it to be done. For God will reward what he loves, puniſh what he hates. And though his recompences are neither perfect nor proportionable, they are real and conſiderable, even here. Experience hath found it: ſcripture hath foretold it. The *Jewiſh* nation indeed proſpered or ſuffered, according to their doings, more conſtantly and equally than others. But ſtill, not only *theſe things happened to them for our enſamples, and are written for our admonition* ‡: but in the ſame ages, God viſited the Heathen alſo for their iniquities; *and lengthened their tranquillity*, when they *broke off their ſins by righteouſneſs* §. Chriſtian ſtates, we confeſs, as they were not in being, are not mentioned in the goſpels or epiſtles; but *Godlineſs hath the promiſe* there *of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come* ‖; and the *Revelation* of St. *John*, a prophetical work, deſcribes whole kingdoms, and yet larger portions

* John xv. 8. † Mal. ii. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 11.
§ Dan. iv. 27. ‖ 1 Tim iv. 8.

portions of the earth, as undergoing the ſevereſt of temporal judgments, for the abominations which they had committed. We ought to be deeply affected therefore by every declaration of God's purpoſes in this reſpect throughout his word. And the ſum of them is: *If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuſe and rebel, ye ſhall be devoured with the ſword: for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it* *.

Which then is our caſe? Are we God's people? Are we even ſenſible what that phraſe implies? That we believe, not a preſumptuous ſcheme of falſely-called rational religion, framed by our fancies, but the *myſtery of the goſpel* †: that we practiſe, not arbitrary ſyſtem of polite morals, indulgently relaxed to ſit eaſy upon our inclinations, but all thoſe duties, in their genuine ſtrictneſs, which *the grace of God, that bringeth ſalvation, came to teach; denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, living ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world; and looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works* ‡. Do we know ourſelves by this picture? Or is not the very different one, which I have ſo often been obliged to ſet before you, ſtill our true reſemblance? Are we not regardleſs in general, both of a preſent providence and of future rewards? Have not many of us caſt off with ſcorn, and moſt of us contributed to looſen, thoſe ties of faith and worſhip, which in every country elſe, and in this till of late, have always been held neceſſary, even to civil welfare? They, who have not rejected religion, do they not however, numbers of them, ſlight the exerciſes of it, wholly in private, and to a great degree in public? Nay, ſuch as appear pretty regular in them, and ſeem to have a real ſenſe of piety, have they any zeal for it, and ſorrow for the decay of it? Do they not feel and expreſs more diſlike and contempt of thoſe whom they think, and perhaps but think, *righteous overmuch* §, than of the moſt thoughtleſs about their ſpiritual ſtate, not to ſay, the moſt abandoned?

* Iſa. i. 19, 20. † Eph. vi. 19.
‡ Tit. ii. 11—14. § Eccl. vii. 16.

abandoned? Are we not in common life diſſolute, expenſive, negligent of our affairs, our families, our very children, at leaſt in the moſt important point, their principles; overrun by an epidemic rage for hourly pleaſures and amuſements, with an utter contempt of conſequences; which, after infecting almoſt univerſally the upper, and next to them the middle part of the world, is yearly ſpreading wider among thoſe, whoſe parſimony and uſeful induſtry is the wealth of the nation? Are we not alſo in our political capacities, how irreconcileably ſoever we differ, lamentably alike; void of reverence to authority, ſubordinate or ſupreme; attentive chiefly, if not only, to ſelfiſh or party conſiderations, varniſhed over with tranſparent pretences of public good; vehement about diſputable matters, unconcerned about confeſſedly neceſſary ones; each denomination, each order and rank, bitterly accuſing the other, and none ever thinking in earneſt to amend themſelves; extremely afraid of hurting liberty by reſtraining wickedneſs, but not at all of being undone by indulging it; wonderfully jealous of the power of our own church, which hath and deſires leſs, than ever any other in any age; but perfectly eaſy about the daily growth of Popery, the moſt tyrannical empire over ſoul and body that can be, and the moſt peculiarly formidable to this country? *My people is fooliſh, they have not known me; they are wiſe to do evil, but to do good they have no underſtanding* *.

Can ſuch a nation hope for the favour of providence? Could it flouriſh, even were there no Providence? Evidently it is impoſſible. Sentiments of religion and virtue are the ſeeds of all happineſs, the ſecurity in all danger, the ſupport in all affliction. Theſe are decaying apace, and wearing quite out. Habits of prudence, formed by a careful education, might in ſome poor meaſure ſupply their place. But we have them not. In trifles indeed we are bred up to a ſtrict obſervance of rules and forms and faſhions; but in points of conſequence every one is left, from his early youth, to do as he pleaſes; and they moſt, whoſe example will be moſt followed. General diſlike and ſhame, however, might reſtrain perſons, when they come out into the world, from ſeveral vices,

* Jer. iv. 22.

vices, againſt which they had no preſervative before. But with us, there are few vices or none of which any body needs be aſhamed: the moſt notoriouſly guilty of the worſt, are as well received in all places, if not better, than other perſons. Yet, even in ſuch a ſtate, ſtrict laws, vigorouſly executed, might deter, at leaſt from the more immediately miſchievous crimes. But we are deſtitute of this guard alſo. A great part of our laws, from the univerſal remiſſneſs of the times, are ſcarce executed at all; and, from the nature of our conſtitution, cannot be executed ſo effectually as where power is leſs bounded. Still this conſtitution, with its many defects, eſpecially under a prince, who, God be thanked, moſt cordially wiſhes the continuance and improvement of that and every advantage to his ſubjects, amply compenſates for many inconveniencies, and preſerves many valuable privileges not enjoyed elſewhere. But then ſuch inward diſorders muſt by degrees impair and undermine it, till at length it will fall; poſſibly the ſooner, the more ſafely we think we can follow our own devices. Peace may be no bleſſing to ſuch as will abuſe it; and the ſcripture hath told us long ago, that *the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them.* After all, it would be ſomething, if when we had reduced ourſelves to the ſame condition with the reſt of the world, in point of freedom at home, by our unworthineſs and incapacity of it, we had a proſpect remaining of ſecurity from abroad. Other nations, neither free nor virtuous, though internally miſerable on both accounts, continue for a time, perhaps a conſiderable one, to anſwer purpoſes of God's wiſdom, externally potent, courted and dreaded. But what conſolation can we draw from hence, exhauſted and burdened as we are; with ſo little to hope, as experience hath ſhewn us, even from the friendlier part of our neighbours; and ſo much to apprehend from the neareſt and moſt powerful, who hath repeatedly attempted our deſtruction; whoſe ſtrength, in the only weak article, will be recruited with zeal and indignation; to whoſe deſigns we have always been the chief obſtacle, and whoſe ſucceſs in them muſt be fatal both to our religious and civil intereſts?

Think not that *I am become your enemy, becauſe I tell you the truth* *. Would God it would permit me to ſay every

* Gal. iv. 16.

thing that was pleaſing to you. Think not that I delight, or even mean, to foretel evil; I mean only to caution you againſt it. And who ſhall or will, if the miniſters of God's word do not? And what muſt follow? *I have ſeen*, ſaith he himſelf, *in the prophets of Jeruſalem, an horrible thing: They ſtrengthen the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedneſs. They ſay unto them that deſpiſe me, The Lord hath ſaid, Ye ſhall have peace; unto every one that walketh in the imagination of his own heart, no evil ſhall come upon you. Behold a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury: it ſhall fall grievouſly on the head of the wicked. But if they had ſtood in my counſel, and cauſed my people to hear my words, then they ſhould have turned them from their evil way* *. Think not, however, ſuch language might be ſpared on this day of rejoicing. It might ſo indeed, had we either been hitherto innocent, or were now duly penitent: but being ſuch, as God knows we are, admonition of our faults is indiſpenſably neceſſary, to excite our thankfulneſs, that we are not puniſhed in proportion to them; and warning of our dangers, to remind us of proving our gratitude, by that obedience which alone will obtain us protection. Would we but make this uſe of the preſent ſolemnity, then it would be a day of gladneſs indeed; a day *much to be obſerved unto the Lord through all our generations* †, for laying the only ground-work of public happineſs. And therefore I muſt repeat to you, on the concluſion of this war, what I earneſtly recommended to your conſideration at the beginning of it, that when *Aſa*, king of *Judah*, was returning home, both with peace and victory, the prophet *Azariah went out to meet him, and ſaid, Hear ye me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you, while ye be with him: and if ye ſeek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forſake him, he will forſake you* ‡.

Other methods to ſupport a tottering, or raiſe a ſinking ſtate, without reformation, frequently overturn it; and at beſt are only palliatives, temporary expedients, to delay a little its final ruin. *Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people ſlightly, ſaying, Peace,*

* Jer. xxiii. 14, 17, 19, 22. † Exod. xii. 42.
‡ 2 Chron. xv. 1, 2.

Peace, peace, when there is no peace *. *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked* †. And not only the ſacred writings have ſaid this, but Heathens have ſaid it, who knew them not; Infidels have ſaid it, who regard them not; innumerable facts have proclaimed it in every age. But above all, it holds in limited governments like ours. There muſt be public virtue, or they cannot ſtand. There muſt be private virtue, or there cannot be public. There muſt be religion, or there can be neither. There muſt be true religion, or there will be falſe. There muſt be attendance on God's worſhip, or there will be no religion at all. Not four years ago, it was univerſally doubted whether we had principle enough, of any kind, left, to make an effort for the preſervation of every thing valuable to us. Moſt happily more appeared than was expected. Yet God knows how it had proved, if the trial had gone but a little further. And for God's ſake let us provide, as much as ever we can, againſt the next. How ſoon it may happen, is beyond human foreſight. But in the mean while, we have ſome leiſure, not only for perſonal amendment, which is equally poſſible in all ſeaſons, but for concerting ſchemes, and executing, as well as framing, laws for public reformation. In war, many things, confeſſed to be right and neceſſary, are put off, becauſe the attention muſt be confined to the immediate danger. And if they are put off in peace too, becauſe there is no immediate danger, when are they to be minded; and what will be the conſequence if they never are?

I would by no means excite a raſh and ignorant zeal, to be meddling where we ſee not to the bottom of things; much leſs a factious one, to cramp and embarraſs, diſquiet and inflame. Theſe practices muſt be hurtful; they may be pernicious; and the firſt article in true patriotiſm is conſcientiouſly abſtaining from them. Taking unwarrantable ſteps, in oppoſition to ſuch as we may think, whether too haſtily or not, bad men and bad meaſures, is only introducing additional wickedneſs of our own, and giving others a pretence for continuing, and even increaſing theirs. Or ſhould we ſucceed againſt them, yet ſuch as act ill to get power to act well, ſeldom

* Jer. vi. 9, 14. † Iſ. lvii. 21.

dom of never uſe it to that purpoſe, when they have it, whatever they may intend beforehand.

The rule then is, that each perform his own duty ſteadily and calmly; rejoice, and acknowledge it with thankfulneſs, when others perform theirs; and be very moderate, when he apprehends they overlook or tranſgreſs it; endeavour to rectify what is wrong, ſo far as it belongs to his ſtation; but *never exerciſe himſelf in matters which are too high for him* *; nor watch more ſolicitouſly over the conduct of the ſtate than over his own heart and life. He that neglects the latter, will ſeldom be thoroughly in earneſt, and ſeldomer yet impartial, about the former; or though he were, will have much leſs weight than a better man. The one is incumbent on us all; the other on very few; in the one we need never miſtake or fail, in the other we muſt frequently. Therefore let us earneſtly *pray for the peace of Jeruſalem* †; but remember, that the ſureſt way of *ſeeking to do it* further *good* ‡, is firſt to be at peace ourſelves with God and with men.

Preſſing you to general reformation, as the means of general happineſs, may ſeem a very hopeleſs expedient; but it is the only one which Heaven hath pointed out, or will bleſs. Whether you will make uſe of it, depends on yourſelves. We are *charged, before God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, to preach the word; be inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine* §. We do accordingly, *as ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us, pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, Be ye reconciled to God* ‖: and when we have done ſo, *we have delivered our ſouls* ¶; but we beg you think of your own. The fewer will amend, the more need there is that we ſhould add to the number. Our doing it may be of ſome benefit to others, we know not how great; but at leaſt will be infinitely beneficial to ourſelves. We ſhall be happy whatever they be: happy, even at preſent; though leſs than if all were ſo. Probably, indeed, when times of trouble come, we ſhall ſuffer with them; but poſſibly not, or however not ſo

* Pſal. cxxxi. 2. † Pſal. cxxii. 6. ‡ Ver. 9.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. ‖ 2 Cor. v. 20. ¶ Ezek. xxxiii. 9.

ſo much as we apprehend: *For the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptation* *. Or if he determine otherwiſe, he will *enable us to bear it* †: and *ſuffering* now *according to his will* ‡, is a title to more enjoyment in a better life. This world is not our main concern. They, who take it for their portion, will be every one anxiouſly providing for his own ſeparate advantage in it; and conſequently every one injurious to his neighbours, and uneaſy in himſelf; but let felicity hereafter be the point in view, and tranquillity here will be the reſult. *The peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep our hearts and minds through Jeſus Chriſt* §. Even if we ſuffer, not only in common with others, but more than others; if we are deſpiſed, hated, ill treated, for what ought to procure us honour and friendſhip, our piety, integrity, regularity; ſtill the ſpirit within us will ſupport us; *we ſhall receive an hundredfold now in this time, with perſecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life* ‖. *Say ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with him: for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands ſhall be given him* ¶.

Doubtleſs good perſons will be ſorry, as they have cauſe, for what the public muſt undergo, unleſs reformation prevent it. But at the ſame time they will acquieſce, as they have cauſe, with entire complacency, in the juſtice of providence; and the more, as the ſevereſt diſpenſations of it are bringing forward continually, though by unſeen ways, that bleſſed ſtate of things, even on this earth, of which, however elſe improbable in itſelf, the attributes of God afford us hope; and his prophets, aſſurance. Nay, thoſe nations themſelves, whom, by his puniſhments, he makes miſerable for being bad, may by that very miſery be made good, and then happy. *I will leave in the midſt of thee*, ſaith God to *Jeruſalem, an afflicted and poor people, and they ſhall truſt in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Iſrael ſhall not do iniquity, nor ſpeak lies.* It follows,

* 2 Pet. ii. 9. † 1 Cor. x. 13. ‡ 1 Pet. iv. 19.
§ Phil. iv. 7. ‖ Mark x. 30. ¶ Iſa. iii. 10, 11.

follows, *They ſhall feed and lie down, and none ſhall make them afraid* *.

Such a cure, though effected by ſuch diſcipline, would be an unſpeakable bleſſing. But ſurely we are not reſolved, that no other ſhall do. God is trying at preſent milder methods; and the language of his proceedings is, *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael?—Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together* †. But ſtill in the midſt of his mercies, his threatenings remain in full force; and we have a ſolemn warning, that *if, when we hear the words of his curſe, we bleſs ourſelves, and ſay, we ſhall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts;—the Lord will not ſpare us, but his anger and his jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt us; and all the curſes, that are written in his book, ſhall lie upon us* ‡. For a long time we ſeemed to think, that we might ſecurely truſt in our own wealth and ſtrength, our own policy and bravery, let us behave to our Maker as we would. He hath given us, through a courſe of years, ample conviction of our miſtake, if any thing will convince us; and he hath given us now time to act upon that conviction. Let us therefore at length entitle ourſelves to truſt in him: turn our minds *to fear God, honour the king, love the brotherhood* §, that is the public; ceaſe from our profane diſcourſe, our unbelieving preſumption, our uncharitable contentions, our ſelfiſh projects, our diſſolute pleaſures, our idle amuſements, our faſhionable affectations, our deſtructive expences: beg pardon of our guilt, through Jeſus Chriſt; and aſſiſtance of our weakneſs, through the ſpirit of grace: govern our lives by the rules of the goſpel; and both awe and cheer ourſelves by continual thoughts of that *day, when God will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man, whom he hath ordained* ‖. All this is the indiſpenſable duty of every one, were he to be ſingle in performing it; there are ſome, God be thanked, who practiſe it now; the addition of a few, that would be exemplary, might win many more; and were but the imitation general, hear the promiſe

* Zeph. iii. 12, 13. † Hoſ. xi. 8. ‡ Deut. xxix. 19, 20.
§ 1 Pet. ii. 17. ‖ Acts xvii. 31.

promiſe made to it. *Thus ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Iſrael: I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit; which leadeth thee by the way, that thou ſhouldeſt go. O that thou wouldeſt hearken to my commandments: then ſhould thy peace be as the river; and thy righteouſneſs as the waves of the ſea* *.

* Iſa. xlviii. 17, 18.

SERMON CXXIV.

(Preached before the UNIVERSITY of OXFORD, on ACT SUNDAY in the Afternoon, *July* 8. 1733.)

THE ADVANTAGE OF A RIGHT EDUCATION.

DEUT. xxxii. 46, 47.

And he ſaid unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words, which I teſtify among you this day; which ye ſhall command your children to obſerve to do all the words of this law.

For it is not a vain thing for you: Becauſe it is your life; and through this thing ye ſhall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to poſſeſs it.

THESE words contain the laſt exhortation, which *Moſes*, the great founder of the *Jewiſh* ſtate, gave his countrymen, on the very day wherein he had notice of his approaching death. He had freed them, with infinite danger to himſelf, from *Egyptian* tyranny, and the worſe bondage of idolatry and ſuperſtition: he had received for them, from God's own mouth, ſuch laws of life, as in their circumſtances were moſt conducive to virtue and happineſs: theſe he had delivered to his people, eſtabliſhed on the ſureſt foundation of regard; affectionate reverence to the object of all duty, and author of all good: he had laboured, with infinite patience, through a long courſe of years, to cultivate in them this important principle of religious obedience; and now, drawing near to the cloſe of a life ſpent in their ſervice, he recommends

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it again, firſt, with all the force of a moſt perſuaſive eloquence, and afterwards by every charm that poetry itſelf could add; ſetting happineſs and miſery before them, in an ode of divine ſublimity and ſpirit, which they are commanded by Heaven to learn themſelves, and teach their poſterity. This, therefore, he communicates in a ſolemn manner to the whole congregation, as the concluſion of all his cares for them; and then takes his final leave in the exhortation of the text, confirming once more at his death the importance of thoſe precepts which he had been giving them through his whole life. *Set your hearts, &c.*

Their own obſervance of God's law was ſecuring the felicity of one generation only; but educating their children in religion and virtue, this was perpetuating bleſſings to each part of the ſociety and to the whole; laſting proſperity and peace in the good land they were going to poſſeſs; and in that *better country* *, of which it was an emblem, *life for evermore* †.

The words afford then a juſt occaſion for ſpeaking,

I. Of the advantages of right education; and,

II. The duty of endeavouring that theſe advantages may be obtained.

I. The advantages, and indeed neceſſity, of right education.

Other creatures arrive, without their own care, at the ſmall perfection of which they are capable, and there ſtop: but the whole of man's exiſtence, that appears, is a ſtate of diſcipline and progreſſion. Youth is his preparation for maturer years; this whole life for another to come. Nature gives the abilities to improve; but the actual improvement we are to have the pleaſure and the reward of giving ourſelves and one another. Some minds, indeed, as ſome ſoils, may be fruitful without cultivation; others barren with it; but the general neceſſity is the ſame in both caſes; and in both, the richeſt, and moſt capable of producing good fruit, will be over-run, if neglected, with the rankeſt and worſt weeds.

Now, the only univerſal precaution that can be in this reſpect, Chriſtianity hath furniſhed, by introducing a ſtated method

* Heb. xi. 16. † Pſ. cxxxiii. 4.

method of inſtruction unknown before; which, joined with the parents private care, is, to the generality of mankind, ſufficient for the purpoſes of intellectual and moral improvement. But to perſons of more extenſive influence, a more particular and appropriated inſtitution is neceſſary, for the world's ſake as well as their own. This, with regard to the teachers of religion, men almoſt without exception acknowledge; but too commonly forget it in another caſe, of no leſs importance; theirs, I mean, whoſe authority is to enforce the laws of conduct, and whoſe example is to lead the way in life. Here ſometimes a wrong care, often an imperfect one, is taken by the fondeſt parents. The outward accompliſhments and decencies of behaviour they teach them with great exactneſs, and do well; but then, without the leaſt further proviſion, ſend them abroad into the ſchool of the world, there to learn what they can. The conſequence is, what muſt naturally be expected: trifles and follies, ever readieſt at hand, and beſt ſuited to the unjudging mind, get firſt into poſſeſſion; and, in many, leave place for nothing elſe to enter. Such, unqualified for the valuable employments of life, muſt loſe their days in the low amuſements of a falſe and effeminate politeneſs; hoping for no higher a character, than a ſet of creatures, equally contemptible, can give one another by mutual admiration; and happy, after all, if they chance to preſerve an innocent worthleſſneſs.

But ſuppoſe room left for ſome attention to knowledge, not even the forms of decent carriage, though obvious things, are fully learnt without regular application; what ſort of acquaintance then with ſcience muſt that be, which is picked up occaſionally and by accident? A thorough one indeed we muſt judge it, were the firſt appearance to determine us; that air of ſufficiency, with which a perſon thus educated for the moſt part delivers his ſentiments. But if we examine, as the world will, what is under this appearance to ſupport it, then a mind is diſcovered, thoughtleſsly perſuaded of its own knowledge, where it is very ignorant, and affecting knowledge, even though it is conſcious of having none: firſt making haſtily whatever determination is faſhionable, about queſtions half underſtood, and not at all conſidered, be their importance what it will; and then going on immediately to act

upon

upon this determination, without the leaſt diffidence, or the leaſt thought what the laws of human actions are; unmoved by reaſon, and ſcorning it; but changing frequently on mere fancy; and fluctuating through life without rule or guide, from the forward extravagances of a profligate youth, to the end of an early and deſpicable old age.

The benefits of converſation greatly depend on the previous attainments, both of thoſe who are ſuppoſed to communicate knowledge and to receive it. If therefore inſtruction be neglected, converſation will grow trifling; if perverted, dangerous. Still, acquaintance with the world, however corrupted, may be an uſeful part of education; but then it muſt be the laſt. It gives a beautiful poliſh; but of this the beſt prepared mind will be the moſt ſuſceptible. It teaches many things; but good or bad, according as the learner is qualified to diſtinguiſh. He whom, improved good ſenſe hath enabled to obſerve upon common practice, will extract wiſdom and virtue from the vices and follies of mankind: but ſuch as are ignorant, and capable only of imitating, will of courſe admire the worſt of what they ſee; and be the more effectually ruined, the more they aim to be accompliſhed. It is therefore a mercileſs thing to throw out poor creatures, unprincipled in what is right, to ſhift for themſelves, where ſo much wrong is to be learnt.

Regular cultivation of the underſtanding then is what good education begins with. The earlieſt branch of this, acquaintance with uſeful languages, unlocks the treaſures of ancient learning, and makes the improvements of every age and climate our own. Then the politer parts of literature moſt agreeably open the faculties, and form the taſte of young perſons; adorn our diſcourſe, and endear our company, in riper years; give a grace to wiſdom and virtue; relieve the fatigue of our buſy hours, and elegantly fill up the leiſure of our vacant ones. At the ſame time the art of juſt reaſoning opportunely comes in, to curb the licence of imagination, and direct its force; to fix the foundations of ſcience; aſcertain the degrees of probability, and unveil ſpecious error. With this guide we proceed ſurely. Knowledge of nature opens the univerſe to our view; enables us to judge worthily of the conſtitution of things; ſecures us from the weakneſs of

vulgar ſuperſtitions; and contributes, in many ways, to the health and ſecurity, the convenience and pleaſure of human life. If from hence we go on to ſurvey mankind; a contemplation of their different ſtates in different ages, and eſpecially of their ancient regulations and laws, the public wiſdom of brave and great nations, will furniſh variety of uſeful reflections to the mind; of teaching us to improve our own condition, often to be happy in it.

It muſt be obvious, how rational an entertainment theſe things are; and how uſeful materials they furniſh, to ripen and perfect that prudence and good ſenſe, which not only carries us through the buſineſs of life, but gives reliſh and ſtability to the pleaſures of it. If then knowledge ought to be attained, the way to it ought to be made eaſy; by removing difficulties, cautioning againſt miſtakes, and leading forwards in a right method. Above all, application ought to be ſecured by the authority of a prudent inſtructor, and emulation excited by a number of fellow-learners.

But if education ſtop here, it hath only given abilities and powers, the direction of which to right or wrong purpoſes is greatly uncertain ſtill. He that knows not the proper uſe of his own being; *what is man, and whereto ſerveth he; what is his good, and what is his evil**, may eaſily employ his other knowledge ſo as to be much the worſe for it. This inquiry then is the important one. Various methods of conducting life preſent themſelves; contradictory inclinations demand to be gratified: the conflict is painful; the end of it may be more ſo: which way is right, and which ſhall we take? Now, there is a ſcience that can direct us here; can ſhew us an inward principle, endued with native authority to govern all the reſt; obedience to which gives a ſteady aim and ſelf-approbation to our conduct; beſtows on us the trueſt ſatisfactions of life, and delivers us from its ſoreſt evils. Nor are morals only the ſource of private happineſs, but the great foundation of mutual ſecurity, the only one of eſteem and friendſhip amongſt men. A perſon of true goodneſs, though otherwiſe of ſmall accompliſhments, will always make an amiable figure in ſociety, and be a valuable part of it; where-

as,

* Ecclus xviii. 8.

as, without a virtuous heart, the ſuperior abilities of the great man will only render him a more extenſive miſchief; and the deceitful agreeableneſs of the gay man qualify him to miſlead, betray, and ruin, more entirely, thoſe with whom he converſes. Thus, wherever wickedneſs increaſes, will miſery increaſe alſo, till the end be univerſal confuſion. For though a conſtitution, ſinking under vice, may preſerve, for ſome time, the florid look of health, yet inward ſtrength, and laſting vigour, are what nothing but virtue, public and private, can give to any people. This is that true wiſdom, *in whoſe right hand is length of days, and in her left riches and honour* *.

Now, the foundations of virtue are indeed laid by nature, both in the reaſon and affections of mankind, though fallen: but reaſon is ſo often inattentive, and affections are ſo eaſily depraved, that, without further care, thoſe moral principles, which make the beſt part of our inward frame, will in moſt men be greatly obſcured, and in ſome, to all appearance, quite effaced. And were even thoſe of righter minds left each to form their private ſyſtem, tenderneſs for their own failings, or prejudice for thoſe of the world, would often lead them into imperfect notions and wrong practice. One indiſpenſable branch then of liberal education is an accurate inſtitution in this important ſcience; to pull off the diſguiſes which vice affects to wear, and place the conſequences of it in a juſt light; to point out the leſs obvious advantages of virtue, and ſhew its reſtraints to end in real freedom; to repreſent the ſtrict connections of its ſeveral parts, and make ſtrong the proof, that *knowledge of wickedneſs is not wiſdom, neither at any time the counſel of ſinners prudence* †.

And when ſhould the ſcience of life be taught, but in the beginning of life, before evil habits are added to original depravity; whilſt the natural regard to truth and right, the only inward reſtraint of incautious youth, remains comparatively uncorrupt, and the ſeeds of ſin lie yet ſomewhat looſe on the ſurface of the mind; much harder to be cleared away, when once they have taken root, and twiſted themſelves ſtrongly about the heart. This, therefore, is the favourable

* Prov. iii. 16. † Ecclus xix. 22.

opportunity, in which authority and reaſon muſt exert at once their joint force. For diſcipline without inſtruction is mere tyranny; and inſtruction without diſcipline, little better than uſeleſs talk. Things owned to be fit and good are neglected, becauſe diſagreeable; things evidently hurtful purſued for preſent pleaſure. Here authority comes in to the aid of reaſon; enforces virtuous application; reſtrains vicious indulgences; tempers the warmth of youth; prepares us for the future ſubordinations of life; conducts us ſafe through the unſeen dangers of our moſt dangerous time; and then by gentle degrees withdraws its influence, as the power of ſelf-government grows up. Where want of this care leaves young perſons too ſoon in the worſt of hands, their own, it is dreadful to ſee into what irretrievable miſeries they plunge, in the very beginning of their courſe. And, therefore, the more liberty they are afterwards to enjoy, the more prudent, though not ſtricter, reſtraint they ſhould be under at firſt, and entered by ſlow ſteps into the world at large, with all poſſible cautions given them of the hazards they are going upon, and (God knows) have little reaſon to be eager for.

But the moſt ſerious part of education is wanting ſtill: the part which leads us, by the eſteem of moral excellence, to honour and love that Being in whom the perfection of it dwells; and extends our inward ſenſe of duty, ſuggeſted firſt by the low and ſhort-lived relations between us and our fellow-creatures, to the higheſt poſſible and eternal object of it, the Creator and Ruler of this univerſe. He, by whoſe pleaſure we are, from whoſe favour all that we enjoy and hope for comes, according to whoſe determination our whole exiſtence ſhall be happy or miſerable, is not ſurely one with whom we are unconcerned. And however a baſe nature may value itſelf on the impotent affectation of ſlighting God, every worthy mind will delight to expreſs that veneration, and pay that obedience, which are due to Him, who is the Lord of all: due by every ſtrongeſt claim, whether unaſſiſted reaſon diſcover the general laws of his moral kingdom, or infinite wiſdom, the beſt judge of our circumſtances, condeſcend to adapt to them further obligations. It is indeed the ſenſe of our living under his government and care, that makes our condition of being deſireable. Religion, filling the mind with that object

which

which it naturally ſeeks, a ſovereign protector, infinitely wiſe and good, effectually excludes all ſuperſtitious terrors; and, far from depreſſing the tendereſt ſpirit, exalts us into every thought and every hope that is great and noble. Turbulence of paſſions, and obſtinacy of ſelf-will, theſe are the things that tear and weaken the ſoul: reverence of God, by awing them into compoſure, ſtrengthens every inward principle that ought to be ſtrong; and if it prunes the luxuriances, promotes, by ſo doing, the vigour of the mind. Religion comprehends at once every motive, both of virtue and of private intereſt, that can either direct or ſupport the heart in every part of conduct; joins in perpetual union our duty and our happineſs; and makes the univerſal ſcheme of things conſiſtent, beautiful, and good.

Surely then principles of ſuch a tendency ought to have an early and diligent cultivation in every breaſt, but theirs eſpecially whoſe rank or profeſſion will make it of the moſt public conſequence. They who object againſt this care, as inſtilling prejudices, ſhould conſider, that virtue, honour, decency, are prejudices juſt of the ſame ſort; and think what would follow, were men to enter upon life free from the bias of any one good quality. But in truth, God himſelf, not man, hath planted theſe juſt prepoſſeſſions in the heart; and all that education does, is to favour their growth. Religion, and the evidences for it, may indeed be unfairly repreſented by its teachers; and what part of knowledge may not? But are only the teachers of religion capable of miſrepreſenting it? Hath not every vicious man as ſtrong a motive to incline him againſt it, as even thoſe maintained by it have to incline them in its favour? Hath not fondneſs of novelty, and affectation of ſuperior ſenſe and learning, as great influence on ſome perſons as credulity can have on others? Do we not every day ſee men determine poſitively againſt religion, who are known never once to have thought of it in earneſt; and attack it by all the unfair arts in the world, whilſt they themſelves are declaiming againſt ſuch arts? Do we not ſee them even triumph in the thought of its being falſe, though the everlaſting happineſs of every good man depends upon its truth? And are theſe the worthy ſpirits, to whoſe tutoring young perſons are to be delivered over in their native ignorance, for fear of

prejudices? Or is it not on all accounts wiſe and fit, that the mind, whilſt untainted with evil communication or vice, ſhould have the moſt important of all truths confirmed to it by proper arguments; and be formed to the right and happy temper of cheerful obedience to the greateſt and beſt of Beings, *the Father and God of our lives* *.

Since, therefore, inſtruction of youth in religion, virtue, and knowledge, appears attended with ſo many advantages, it follows,

II. That all perſons concerned ſhould endeavour, with united care, in their ſeveral ſtations, that theſe advantages may be effectually obtained, eſpecially in the places dedicated to that purpoſe.

The public care, in this reſpect, we muſt ever gratefully own, continued through a long ſucceſſion of our princes; and flouriſhing ſtill in its height, under the adminiſtration of a king, zealous for the happineſs of his people, and reſolute to maintain all the rights of all his ſubjects. Next to whoſe aſſured and experienced protection, we cannot but graciouſly acknowledge the gracious munificence of his royal conſort; therefore bountiful to religion and learning, becauſe ſhe moſt intimately knows their value, and moſt affectionately eſteems them.

Secure then of the public favour to whatever is connected with the public good, we have only their attention to ſolicit who are perſonally intereſted: parents, or whoever ſupply their place; the conductors of education, and the young perſons to be educated.

To you who are parents, nature itſelf hath given a tender concern for your childrens welfare as your own; and reminds you juſtly, that as you have brought them into the dangers of life, your buſineſs it is to provide that they get well through them. Now, the only proviſion commonly attended to, of wealth and honours, can never produce happineſs, unleſs the mind, on which all depends, be taught to enjoy them properly. Fortune, without this, will but lead them to more abandoned ſallies of extravagance; and rank expoſe them to more public cenſure. Education then is the great care with which you

* Eccluſ xxiii. 4.

you are entruſted; ſcarce more for their ſakes than your own. You may be negligent of your ſon's inſtruction; but it is on you, as well as himſelf, that his ignorance and contemptibleneſs will bring both reproach and inconvenience. You may be regardleſs of his morals; but you may be the perſon, who will at laſt the moſt ſeverely feel his want of them. You may be indifferent about his religion; but remember, dutifulneſs to you is one great precept of religion; and all the reſt promote ſuch habits, as you may bitterly repent, when it is too late, your omiſſion to cultivate in him; and live and die miſerable on his account, whom timely care would have made your joy and honour.

Parents therefore ſhould always be friends to education, and to places of education: ſhould wiſh well to them; and never, without great reaſon, think ill of them. The enemies of religion and virtue, an increaſing number, will of courſe be enemies to thoſe who teach them; and the more ſo, the more carefully they teach them. The enemies to either part of our happy conſtitution, will look with an evil eye on eſtabliſhments, deſigned for the ſupport of both. More private motives will excite injurious treatment of them from ſome perſons. And even thoſe of better meaning may be engaged, by miſinformations and prejudices, to paſs harſh judgments and ſay unfriendly things. But reaſonable men will always diſtinguiſh, by what perſon, on what grounds, with what temper and what views, diſadvantageous characters are given, or reports raiſed. They will alſo conſider, that the unhappy diviſions of this nation cannot but have cauſed, on all ſides, in length of time, ſome degree of wrong opinion and wrong conduct towards one another; mutual jealouſies and miſunderſtandings between thoſe, whoſe intereſts, and whoſe intentions, were in general the ſame: differences, which it muſt be ruinous to heighten, dangerous to continue, uſeleſs to paſs judgment in; but moſt important to reconcile, by ſuch conduct on every hand, as may give no ſuſpicion of ill deſign, but all proofs of good. Friendly methods will not fail to unite the hearts of men; and make them ſuſceptible of mutual advice and improvement, aſſiſtance and benefit. Whoever will view the ſeats of learning, with theſe conſiderations preſent to his mind, will judge favourably concerning them; and

and not only admire the pious bounty of our anceſtors, who dedicated theſe delightful retreats to knowledge and virtue, founded theſe beautiful ſtructures, enriched them with ſuch amazing treaſures of literature, and provided ſo nobly for the accommodation of fit perſons to enjoy and communicate the inſtruction of them; but be thankful for the many and great bleſſings, which they have conveyed to every age, and will, we hope, derive to lateſt poſterity.

Ideas of perfection are viſionary things; but look into fact, and where will thoſe, who inveigh againſt the education of our univerſities, recommend a more improving one? The indulgent ſoftneſs of the parents family is apt, at beſt, to give young perſons a moſt unhappy effeminateneſs; the governor, if he hath abilities, hath ſcarce ever authority to enforce diligence; want of rivals keeps the mind languid; and, upon the whole, ſeldom any thing conſiderable comes out. If now the contrary method be taken, of ſending them, raw and uninſtructed, to viſit foreign countries; what improvement will minds unprepared for improvement make there? As to religion, the diſuſe of frequenting its exerciſes, and the daily view of its corruptions, will be in danger of effacing all regard to it. With reſpect to morals, in the midſt of ſo great temptation, ſo little reſtraint, and ſo general bad example, it muſt be a high degree of virtue, that can keep itſelf in countenance. Then for ſuch opportunities of inſtruction, as different laws, manners, and cuſtoms, may be ſuppoſed to give; theſe require a mind trained up beforehand to attention and judgment. On all others they will be juſt as likely to make wrong impreſſions as right, if they make any; but indeed what impreſſions of all kinds are uſually made, and how far the improvements brought home anſwer the national expence for them, lies within the compaſs of daily obſervation.

If then, in the next place, we compare at leaſt foreign univerſities with our own: is their theology worthier of God, more conformable to reaſon and primitive Chriſtianity; is their philoſophy juſter and more ſolid, leſs full of imagination and hypotheſis, than that of our great countrymen, whoſe names I need not ſuggeſt? Will the ornamental rewards of learning be more fitly beſtowed, where no time previous to the application for them is required? Will induſtry be more

univerſal,

univerſal, without any inſpection over it; behaviour more regular, without any rule ſet to it; than where young perſons are formed into orderly ſocieties, diſtinguiſhed by proper habits, reſtrained to proper hours, obliged to proper ſtudies, and watched over with continual care? Miſcarriages, after all, will happen in ſuch numbers of ſuch an age. But the general good order that reigns here, to moſt foreigners, not the worſt judges in this caſe, appears incredible when related, and very ſurpriſing when ſeen. It remains only to wiſh, what there never was more hope of; that, as our univerſities have long excelled all others, they may continually improve upon themſelves.

But ſtill, parents muſt not expect their childrens improvement ſhould be great, unleſs they contribute their own ſhare to it. If indolence and luxury be taught them by bad example, or prejudice againſt every thing ſerious and praiſe-worthy by bad converſation, before they come hither; if they come with little or no charge given about regularity and application, but licence be claimed for them in proportion to their quality; or if, after the mere form of a ſhort confinement here, they are let immediately looſe, to wear off by negligence and profligateneſs the few ſlight good impreſſions that could be made; what room hath the parent to hope for improvement, or complain if none be found?

But let him be careful in his own duty firſt; then the perſons, to whom he commits his child afterwards, will undertake, with ſome comfort, an office, laborious and important at all times; but particularly ſo in an age of uncommon corruption; when the expectations of good men are more than ever fixed on their diſcharging this truſt well; and their failure will give bad ones the double joy of ſeeing wickedneſs flouriſh, and accuſing them for it. Complaints indeed of unjuſt accuſations were never better grounded; but complaints alone will do little good; and even deſerved returns of bitterneſs may do much harm. The only remedy is, that *by well doing we put to ſilence* * the unreaſonableneſs of ill perſons, and ſecure the protection of thoſe who mean well.

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* 1 Pet. ii. 15.

The educator of youth therefore will firſt perfect himſelf in each needful qualification, and then apply to forming others. In every ſcience he will join the diſcoveries of later times with ſuch inſtruction, as may render the learning of former ages intelligible; and prudently direct the more particular attention of each perſon to ſuch things, as may chiefly relate to their future part in life.

The foundations of religion he will lay deep and ſtrong; recommending the great articles of it, not to the paſſions of thoſe under his care, by warmth and vehemence; but to their reaſon and faith, by juſt explications and concluſive arguments; neither loading revelation with unauthoriſed doctrines and needleſs difficulties; nor yielding up the leaſt real part of it, to defend the reſt; nor altering the leaſt, to give it a more plauſible appearance. A diſputing and cavilling temper he will endeavour to repreſs; but will treat with all tenderneſs the doubts of an ingenuous mind; and ever encourage that ſacred regard to truth, which makes men worthy of eſteem, even whilſt they err, and is the great ſecurity of their returning into the right way. He will take fit opportunity of ſhewing, how cloſely a due regard to the teachers of religion and virtue is connected with the practice of both. But the perſons, whoſe employment teaching them is to be, he will ſtudiouſly warn, that the only way of ſecuring this regard is, by uſeful and exemplary lives; prudent and inoffenſive conduct; and ſo hearty a friendſhip to all juſt and reaſonable liberty, as may give them unſuſpected authority to oppoſe the diſſolute licentiouſneſs, that in vain aſſumes its name.

To civil government he will conſcientiouſly teach that dutiful obedience and honour, which Chriſtianity requires all ſubjects to pay; and which the happieſt ſubjects in the world ought to pay with the cheerfulleſt gratitude. He will diſcourage, with all poſſible care, the rage of party zeal; which warm and unexperienced minds too often miſtake for public ſpirit. Admitted in this fair diſguiſe, it poſſeſſes the whole man; tinctures his way of thinking on almoſt every ſubject; leads him to hate and injure worthy perſons, to admire and aſſociate amongſt very bad ones; with whom this immoral temper ſtands in the ſtead of all merit, whilſt indeed it hinders the acquiring of any. As life goes on, theſe evils increaſe;

of

of which all the world complains, but unhappily indulges them at the ſame time; inſtead of each curbing, on his own ſide, the eagerneſs and keenneſs of ſo malevolent a principle. Young perſons ſhould therefore be reminded, that the ſeats of learning are purpoſely ſecreted from the buſy ſcenes of life; that the time for engaging in thoſe will come but too ſoon; and mean while the generous ardor of youth ſhould be exerted in making the preparation of uſeful knowledge and virtuous habits; but ever tempered with ſuch mildneſs and diffidence concerning matters, of which they need not judge yet, as they will every day ſee more neceſſary in order to judge and act right.

This is indeed one part of morals; and on every other part the director of education will have an attentive eye. Even the ſallies of a well-meant fervor he will prudently moderate, when they give religion a gloomy appearance, or add to it a needleſs burden. But much more ſtrictly will he guard againſt the oppoſite extreme of libertiniſm and profaneneſs; laboring to keep up, not only an outward form of regularity, but a ſerious awe of God, and ſenſe of duty, in every mind; watching over each tendency to vice, and conſidering wilful neglect of application, as a dangerous kind of guilt. In order to this great end of preſerving morals, he will preſerve and countenance, as far as it remains poſſible, that temperance of living, ſimplicity of appearance, and frugality of expence, which are uſually brought hither, and ſo peculiarly ſuit this inſtitution; which keep the mind in fit temper for the exerciſe of its faculties, and defend it from the corruptions of luxury and vanity; lay the foundations of health and prudence in men for the reſt of their days, and prepare them to be virtuous and eaſy in whatever ſtations may prove their ſhare.

It remains only now, that the perſon, of whom all this care is taken, ſhould know and improve his own happineſs. Too many there are, that ſet out upon the important journey of life without a ſkilful, or perhaps a friendly hand, to conduct them through the difficulties of the untried and hazardous way. Theſe are greatly excuſable in their faults, and pitiable in their miſeries. But of you God and man will expect attainments, that may bear proportion to the advantages, with

which you are bleſſed. Nature engages your parents; duty, honour, and intereſt, your inſtructors, to conſult your welfare; which they deſire as much as yourſelves, and underſtand better. Reſtrain therefore and apply yourſelves as they direct; though you not only feel it painful, but ſee it not yet beneficial; and truſt thoſe, who have all imaginable claim to be truſted, that, by quick degrees, the pain will wear off, and the benefit be evident.

Their province, who are devoted to the ſervice of religion, will be to appear, perhaps after a very ſhort preparation, in an age ſtrongly prejudiced againſt them and their function; ſure objects, without merit, of contempt and hatred; but, with it, capable ſtill of being eſteemed and uſeful. This ſituation, you ſee, requires in the firſt place, that you carefully acquaint yourſelves with the proofs, the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel revelation. Fear not therefore making free inquiry into every thing. Others inquire with bad intention; if you do it not with good, you will want true learning, to oppoſe againſt the falſe and half-learning of unbelievers. Only begin not your inquiry till you are qualified; and end it not till you have conſidered matters thoroughly. Young minds, and often the moſt generous of them, are apt to purſue truth with an impatience, that occaſions their miſſing it. Nothing ought ever to ſtand againſt full evidence well weighed; but many things may induce thoſe, who have yet had little time for thought, to think again, and be diffident in the mean while. For not only the world too commonly imputes to a man, all his life, the indigeſted notions of his early years; but perſons liſt themſelves by poſitive talk, and then cannot retreat. With this caution, and with due method, diligence will go far in acquiring knowledge. But knowledge is only one part of what muſt be attended to. The unguarded conduct, even of perſons of younger days, will be treaſured up in many a malicious memory to their future diſadvantage; and, though an affectation of untimely gravity ſits ill, yet innocence and piety are the duties of every age. They eſpecially, whoſe profeſſion will make a ſtricter abſtinence from doubtful and imprudent pleaſures expected of them hereafter, will find it much the ſafeſt and eaſieſt to begin now; and, by an uniform

form life, grow regularly up into that eſteem, which their deſtination will require.

And though neither the ſame diligence of application, nor ſuch accuracy of conduct, may appear neceſſary in thoſe of higher rank; yet an improved underſtanding muſt be an advantage, and the want of it a blemiſh, proportionably conſpicuous, as the ſtation, in which either appears, is public; and the choice, how life ſhall be ſpent, is always important in the ſame degree, as the perſons are who make it. Such therefore, of all others, ſhould not take it haſtily for granted, than an immoral courſe is right. To begin with virtue, at leaſt till fair inquiry rejects it, is evidently the ſafe part. No one ever bitterly condemned himſelf, that he had ſpent his younger years ſoberly; many have, that they did not. Then ſome degrees of vice are owned to produce miſery; and every vice leads on to worſe degrees of itſelf, and variety of others. Or, though a vicious perſon could depend on ſuffering no preſent harm; yet he cannot fail of doing a great deal; and a man would not chooſe, that the chief traces, which he leaves behind him, to mark out his paſſage through life, ſhould be ſo many injuries done his fellow-creatures. At leaſt no one would venture upon this, till he were ſure there is no ſuperior inſpector of his conduct. Now there cannot be certainty againſt religion; and there are ſuch evidences for it, as muſt require more than a few ſlight cavils, or bold jeſts, to overturn them. A careful examination then it juſtly demands. And if upon ſuch examination it prove true, as undoubtedly it will; remember it is a moſt ſerious truth, in which the foremoſt of mankind is equally concerned with the meaneſt. Therefore in a caſe of ſuch moment, let no falſe ſhame, nor favourite paſſion prevail over you; but *give your hearts early to the Lord that made you**. Lay the foundation of you lives here, on the firm ground of Chriſtian faith; and build upon it whatever is juſt and good, worthy and noble, till the ſtructure be complete in moral beauty. The world, into which you are entering, lies in wait with variety of temptations. Unfavourable ſentiments of religion will ſoon be ſuggeſted to you; and all the ſnares of luxury, falſe honour, and intereſt,

* Eccluſ xxxix. 3.

ſpread in your way; which with moſt of your rank are too ſucceſsful, and to many fatal. Happy the few, that in any part of life become ſenſible of their errors; and, with painful reſolution, tread back the wrong ſteps which they have taken! But happieſt of men is he, who, by an even courſe of right conduct from the firſt, as far as human frailty permits, hath at once avoided the miſeries of ſin, the ſorrows of repentance, and the difficulties of virtue; who not only can think of his preſent ſtate with compoſure, but reflect on his paſt behaviour with thankful approbation; and look forwards, with unmixed joy, to that important future hour, when he ſhall appear before God, and humbly offer to him a whole life ſpent in his ſervice!

SERMON CXXVII.

(Preached in the Pariſh Church of St. *James*, *Weſtminſter*, *January* 30. 1733-4.)

On Reverence of Divine Providence in Governing all the Affairs of Men.

Isa. xxvi. 9.

—When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs.

THE gracious and wiſe Creator of this univerſe continually *upholds it by the word of his power* *; and governs each part of it ſuitably to its nature. The motions of that inanimate world proceed entirely from him. The actions of intelligent beings are indeed their own. But, as God foreſees from eternity what every agent, in every poſſible ſituation, will do or intend, he muſt be able to influence, direct, and temper their conduct, by many ways that are conceivable, and doubtleſs by many more, ſo as not only to aſſiſt and protect perſons in *doing what is lawful and right* †, but alſo to make even the worſt of wretches, in the worſt of their crimes, undeſigning inſtruments of his righteous purpoſes. And it being evidently as worthy of him, as it is eaſy for him, to act thus, the reaſon of mankind hath ever diſpoſed them to believe, what revelation hath fully confirmed, that a *never-failing Providence ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth* ‡. Whatever befalls us, therefore, proſperous or adverſe,

* Heb. i. 3. † Ezek. xviii. 27.

‡ Collect for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

adverſe, being what our Maker judges and determines to be, on one account or another, fit and proper, events of both ſorts may juſtly be called *his judgments*. But as, through the wickedneſs of the world, he hath much oftener occaſion to decree puniſhments than rewards, this name generally denotes the ſeverer exerciſes of his power; the ſufferings that he inflicts on men; or, in other words, that they bring upon themſelves. For the ſtrong connection, which we experience, of our follies and ſins with diſtreſs and miſery, is one thing that proceeds from the juſt judgment of God; from that order and courſe of things which he hath eſtabliſhed.

Amidſt the vaſt variety of providential diſpenſations, ſome are, to human faculties, unfathomable depths. We can only ſee in them the awful exertion of his authority, who is Lord of all; and learn the important leſſon of humbling ourſelves before him, and ſubmitting meekly to his will; in firm expectation, that whatever may look diſorderly and wrong at preſent, will prove in due time to be wiſeſt and beſt. Other things there are capable of affording further inſtruction; concerning which, however, it is eaſy for partiality or inattention to make dangerous miſtakes. For the ſame events being often permitted to befall very different perſons, for as different ends, whoever will *judge according to the* firſt *appearance*, will be far from *judging righteous judgment* *.

But ſtill, multitudes of occurrences remain, which convey ſuch obvious and clear informations and warnings, that Providence muſt intend we ſhould apply them to our own benefit. For God doth not puniſh merely for the ſake of puniſhment. Even his ſeverities are the effects of goodneſs; and always directed to the advantage, either of thoſe who feel them, or at leaſt of others; *that they may hear and fear, and do no more wickedneſs* †. Looking back on the tranſactions of paſt ages, without a moral intention in doing it, is only gratifying an uſeleſs curioſity, or acquiring knowledge full as likely to be ill uſed as well. But it is a moſt ſerious and profitable employment, humbly to trace the footſteps of infinite wiſdom, in the government, as well as creation of the world; and think over the various ſcenes and wonderful viciſſitudes

* John vii. 24. † Deut. xiii. 11.

viſſitudes of mortal affairs, in order to learn a true ſenſe of our condition here, and right notions of behaving in it. *All things* that have ever happened to men, have *happened to them for enſamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come* *. And ſurely an awful admonition it is, to have, as it were, the hiſtory of our ſpecies lying open before us; and the whole experience of man, ſince man hath been, teaching and teſtifying to us, what a dreadful train of evils, perſonal, domeſtic, and national, every tranſgreſſion of the laws of life is capable of drawing after it. Now, as ſome of theſe facts gradually ſink down in the abyſs of time, and diſappear, the wickedneſs of every generation is raiſing up others in their room; which, by the advantage of their nearneſs, we may obſerve more diſtinctly; and receive deeper impreſſions from them, becauſe of the cloſer relation which they bear to us.

Amongſt theſe, the dreadful deed of this day, and the calamities which preceded and followed it, ſet before our eyes a moſt peculiarly inſtructive example of divine judgments, brought down by a ſinful people on their own heads: concerning which, we may juſtly ſay, in the words of the prophet *Daniel*, that *under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jeruſalem* †. To go through the detail of ſo laſting and complicated a miſery, is no more poſſible, than it would be proper, in a diſcourſe of this kind; the buſineſs of which is, neither to diſpute upon the doubtful parts of the hiſtory, nor to amuſe the hearer with the particulars of what is moſt undoubted, but to build religious and moral concluſions on thoſe general facts, which every one muſt admit, and will eaſily recollect, on this mournful ſubject. We all know the tragedy began with the too juſt occaſion, unhappily given on each ſide, for complaints and fears. It proceeded, on the ſide of the diſaffected, to the unjuſtifiable remedies, firſt of ſedition, then of open rebellion; doubly unjuſtifiable, as the grievances alleged were already redreſſed: and it concluded, after the many diſtreſſes of a civil war undergone for ſeveral years, in the murder of the king, and the total ruin of the conſtitution; to which, after trying in vain every

* 1 Cor. x. 11. † Dan. ix. 12.

every way to ſave it, and making ſuch conceſſions for that end, as the better and greater part even of his adverſaries voted to be ſufficient, he died at laſt a willing and a patient martyr.

Theſe are the principal points, from which we are now to draw proper uſes. Paſſion and prejudice may eaſily ſuggeſt very improper ones; and this day become by ſuch applications of things as contending parties are too apt to make, an inſtrument of perpetuating thoſe animoſities, againſt which it ought to caution us for ever. To cenſure with bitterneſs the perſons or the proceedings on either ſide now, when all that were concerned on both, are gone long ſince to anſwer for their ſins before God, is neither uſeful nor decent. And to aſcribe at random the ſame diſpoſitions to any of the preſent generation, is both uncharitable towards them, and prejudicial to the public. What lies before us on the occaſion, is only, from the errors of our anceſtors, to inſtruct and direct ourſelves. And we ſhall never ſee clearly, either what thoſe errors were, or how we are to guard againſt them, unleſs we conſider things with a mild, as well as ſerious, temper of mind. This will teach us, even where we differ, as men muſt be allowed to differ, in judging what the conduct of others was formerly, and how far it was right or wrong, to agree however in our determination of the eſſential queſtion, what our own conduct ought to be now. Thus we ſhall be ſure to avoid all hurtful concluſions, and take the right way to make a variety of uſeful ones. For doubtleſs every rank of men amongſt us, both in church and ſtate, from the higheſt to the loweſt, may *learn* moſt important leſſons of *righteouſneſs*, from thoſe failures of their predeceſſors, and thoſe enſuing miſeries, which we lament this day. There was no one party, or order of men, but did wrong; nor almoſt any one thing, in which they ſinned, but they ſuffered a like return for it. And it ſhould be our buſineſs at preſent, whatever our ſtation is, eccleſiaſtical or civil, not only to recollect the faults in others, of which thoſe, who went before us, complained, but chiefly thoſe, into which they fell themſelves. For thus each part of the ſociety, inſtead of ſuch mutual imputations, as tend to make the whole uneaſy, would be led to ſuch a home amendment, as tends to make it happy. But leaving

and recommending to every ſort of perſons, the care of drawing inferences, rightly ſuited to their own caſes in particular; I ſhall only enlarge on the general directions, which ſo dreadful a time of ſin, and ſuffering, may give to us all in common.

Now the great comprehenſive leſſon, which God intends to teach by every judgment, is an awful regard to himſelf, as the moral governor of the world; and a faithful practice of true religion. But here ſome will inſtantly object, were not the miſchiefs of thoſe days chiefly owing to religion; many of the diſputes merely of a religious nature; and all of them embittered beyond meaſure by a mixture of religious animoſities? How then is it recommended to us from hence? A little patient attention will ſhow you. Real religion, the love of God our common father, the love of him whoſe peculiar precept is *to love one another* *, can never produce hatred and contention upon earth. It is the ſtrongeſt bond, that can be, of union and peace: the ſtricteſt reſtraint of every injurious paſſion; the moſt powerful incitement to every benevolent and merciful deed. It is the only foundation of truſt and ſecurity, amidſt all that can happen around us; and of tranquillity and joy within us. But hypocriſy, ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm, though extremely different from religion, are often miſtaken for it; and theſe may work very fatal effects under its name, eſpecially when pretences of extraordinary piety and purity, on one ſide, are made peculiarly plauſible and popular, by the prevalence of immorality and profaneneſs on the other; which enormities, though far from univerſal, were too common, amongſt the friends of the royal cauſe, notwithſtanding the excellent example of the king, whom even his enemies owned to be ſincerely pious, and ſtrictly virtuous. But then, if religion may be counterfeited or perverted to bad purpoſes, ſo may every good thing in the world; honour, friendſhip, loyalty, public ſpirit, liberty itſelf. And things of an indifferent nature, and little uſe, if often miſapplied, it is juſt and prudent to aboliſh. But attempts againſt the principles, that keep ſociety from diſſolution, as far as they

* John xiii. 34. xv. 12, 17.

can be effectual, muſt be pernicious. And amongſt theſe principles, God hath taken eſpecial care, that the firſt and great law of our being, the reverence due to himſelf, ſhall be extirpated out of the world; and that every effort to weaken it, ſhall be cloſe followed by conſequences of private and public miſery; which will ſeverely prove, as indeed they have begun to do amongſt us, that whatever men, *wiſe in their own conceit* *, may think, *the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil, is underſtanding* †.

The thing then to be endeavoured is, not to leſſen but increaſe the regard to true religion; only diſtinguiſhing it carefully from whatever elſe puts on its name. Want of this care produced great errors and evils, in the days of which I am ſpeaking. There was, it muſt be owned, in the friends and governors of the church, an over warm zeal, and very blameable ſtiffneſs and ſeverity. But there was alſo, in the enemies of the church, a moſt provoking bitterneſs and perverſeneſs; with a wild eagerneſs for innovation, founded on ignorant prejudices, which their heated fancies raiſed into neceſſary truths; and then, looking on them as the cauſe of Chriſt, they thought themſelves bound and commiſſioned to overturn whatever was contrary to them. The enthuſiaſm of that belief gave them a ſpirit and vehemence in all they undertook; which common men, acting on common motives, could hardly be expected to withſtand. Their ſucceſs, in its turn, inflamed their imaginations of being directed and aſſiſted from above; and they thought themſelves authoriſed by this higher diſpenſation, to tread under foot, without ſcruple, the ordinary rules of right and juſtice.

Let us always then beware of all ſuch miſtakes, as then prevailed on either ſide. Let us never be vehement for or againſt matters of indifference; about matters of importance, let us be earneſt with mildneſs; and neither deſire to ſee authority exerciſed in religion, to the oppreſſion of any ones conſcience. Let us cooly conſider, of which extreme we are moſt in danger, and oppoſe that; whatever ſhape or name it aſſumes. The name is but a circumſtance; the thing to be dreaded is, the principle, or the practice, of advancing favourite

* Rom xi. 25. xii. 16. † Job xxviii. 28.

vourite notions and ſchemes by force or fraud. The Puritan zealots were ſhockingly guilty of that crime. The church of *Rome* is, if poſſible, ſtill more ſo: probably not a little concerned in bringing on us the evils of this day; certainly a determined enemy, ever to be had in view, feared and guarded againſt. But then the effectual method of guarding againſt falſehood, is not by oppoſing to it a contrary falſehood, as bad or worſe, and ſetting up licentiouſneſs to encounter bigotry: this, inſtead of curing, is multiplying evils; which, oppoſite as they ſeem, will thrive together, and each aſſiſt the others growth. Nothing can ſecure us from falſe religion but true: nothing give happineſs, private or public, but that ſerious regard to God, which will place us under his fatherly protection; and ſuch rational notions of the doctrines and precepts of his holy word, as will direct us into the practice of all thoſe duties which we owe to each other.

The ſecond leſſon of righteouſneſs, which the judgments of Heaven on our forefathers plainly teach us, is paying due obedience to legal authority, and religiouſly abſtaining from the ſmalleſt inſtances of diſreſpect to it; ſince we find they have inſenſibly carried, even well-meaning and wiſe men, into the utmoſt lengths of wrong and imprudent behaviour. All the diſorders, of which this day reminds us, began with the lower marks of diſaffection: immoderate complaints, indecent reflections, ill-natured interpretations, groundleſs ſuſpicions, firſt thoughtleſsly, then deſignedly, ſpread abroad, till by degrees they took ſuch root, that nothing was too bad to be believed, nothing good enough to be approved. Diſcontent and clamour ſoon ripened into ſedition and tumult; after which, open rebellion and general confuſion followed of courſe. Still, it is by no means unlawful, either to repreſent grievances, or to oppoſe ill meaſures: On the contrary, doing theſe things preſerves a government; neglecting them leads to its ruin: and had the means of doing them been freely and early allowed, and honeſtly uſed, in the times we are now conſidering, probably none of the miſchiefs that followed had ever been known. But then, repreſentations muſt always be true, decent, needful, ſeaſonable. And oppoſition ſhould never be made, but after impartial conſideration, with evident neceſſity, by peaceful and regular methods, by pru-

dent and cautious ſteps; with proper ſubmiſſion to all that are ſet over us, and with the moſt ſacred regard to the ſovereign power; for if that be ſhaken, experience hath ſhewn us all is in danger. Let us therefore only remember, that whatever was wicked and pernicious formerly, is of the ſame nature ſtill; and it will prove an excellent direction to our conduct. From hence perſons in lower ſtations will learn, not to diſquiet themſelves and their neighbours, to ill purpoſe, with injudicious vehemence concerning things out of their ſphere, but leave thoſe to conduct them whoſe buſineſs it is; thinking charitably of them, and praying heartily for them. Thoſe of higher degree will be induced to proceed, in what lies before them, with temper and conſiderateneſs, with equity and candour; with care, neither to provoke reſentment, nor excite jealouſy. And we ſhall all of every rank be inſtructed, to acknowledge thankfully the many bleſſings that we enjoy, beyond what our miſerable anceſtors did a century ago; and not only to bear with cheerfulneſs the neceſſary, though heavy burdens, that have been laid on us, for the ſafety of all which can juſtly be dear to us, but ſubmit with patience to whatever, we may any of us apprehend, we ſuffer more than we need; ſeriouſly reflecting, what fatal effects may ariſe from a different ſpirit. For in the times before us, when there were confeſſedly many grievances, and ſome of them great ones, yet how inconſiderable were they, when compared with the bloodſhed and devaſtation, the oppreſſion and confuſion, the total deſtruction of church and ſtate, which unwiſe and undutiful attempts for redreſs at length produced! Let not us, therefore, *murmur, as ſome of them murmured, and were deſtroyed of the deſtroyer* *.

A third leſſon, which this day affords us, is, not to be fond of innovations, either in civil matters or eccleſiaſtical. It is a common weakneſs of mankind, to overlook the advantages of their condition, and dwell only on its inconveniencies and defects, real or imagined; till, though a very tolerable, or perhaps, on the whole, a very good one, it appears to them worſe than any other into which they can fall. Even the more indolent, therefore, inſtead of diſcountenancing, look favourably

* 1 Cor. x. 10.

favourably on propoſals for change. And the more enterpriſing ruſh on with eagerneſs to unhinge and overſet; never once reflecting, whether the project be not either impoſſible to be accompliſhed, or not worth the pains; injurious to others, or likely to prove pernicious to themſelves; never ſeriouſly conſidering what they have to ſubſtitute, whether it can take place; and laſt, whether it will be, on the whole, for the better or the worſe. Thus were too many of our predeceſſors in this nation diſpoſed: extremely miſerable under a conſtitution of government, which they found too late inſeparable from their happineſs; and ſo earneſt to reform every part of it, that they ruined the whole. The projects for eſtabliſhing perfect liberty in the ſtate, ended, as too much liberty always will, in abſolute tyranny: ſucceſſive tyrannies, of various ſhapes, and names unheard of, diſpoſſeſſing each other; harraſſing the nation with continual uncertainties and alarms; exhauſting it with daily executions and impoſitions. The ſchemes for reſtoring an imaginary purity in the church, unexpectedly ran to ſuch lengths, as deſtroyed the whole frame of it, and involved the crown in its fall. No other form of religion could be ſet up inſtead of that which was aboliſhed. Mens minds were held in continual agitation, by the wild zeal of contending ſects: teaching doctrines, ſome blaſphemous againſt God; ſome ſubverſive of all order amongſt men; ſome contrary to all care of virtue and good life; and every thing was tolerated, but what had a right to be eſtabliſhed. How theſe things would have ended; whether in a total contempt of religion, and moral obligations too; or whether, after that was found inſupportable, as it ſoon muſt, the *Romiſh* ſuperſtition, ever vigilant and active, would have overſpread the nation, wearied out with diviſions, and glad to embrace any thing that promiſed unity: this God hath mercifully hid from our knowledge, by bleſſing us, in the extremity of ſuch miſery, with its only cure, the reſtoration of our ancient conſtitution. Let us eſteem it then as we ought, and be zealous to preſerve it; improve it, if we can really and ſafely; but not be forward to practiſe upon it without neceſſity, or ſome very valuable end. Hoping for perfection in any thing human, is viſionary; murmuring for want of it, is reſolving never to be happy; and taking irregular methods

to obtain it, is the ſure way to be wretched. Some alterations, indeed, from time to time, the reaſon of things, and the changes of circumſtances may require: but that no wanton or doubtful, much leſs dangerous trials, ought to be made, the fatal experience of this day fully ſhews.

And a fourth direction, which it gives as plainly, is, to beware of the ſpirit of party. Nothing but that could have blinded and embittered people ſo, as to make them deſtroy themſelves and the public, without ſeeing or feeling it. Few, if any, at firſt, had the leaſt intention of what they afterwards did: very probably, had it been foretold them, they would have abhorred the thought. But perſons cannot even gueſs, when they give themſelves up to this kind of zeal, how ſtrong it may grow within them; or how they may be entangled, and carried on, againſt their wills. *The beginning of ſtrife is as when one letteth out water:* nobody can ſay how far it may overflow, or how hard it may be to get it back into its channel, and repair the breach. *Therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with* *, and by mutual provocation worked up into a rage. When party reſentments and conteſts run high, the general good is no longer in view: both ſides attend wholly to the advancement of their own power; depreſſing their adverſaries; forcing them into meaſures hurtful to the public; the worſe the better; and no way is left untried to ruin one another, till the ruin of the whole is too probable a conſequence. But above all, in countries bleſt with freedom, amidſt numberleſs advantages, there is one peculiar danger; that the high ſpirit which it gives men, and the full opportunities which they have to exert that ſpirit, may produce diſſentions utterly deſtructive, not only of peace and comfort, but, in the end, of freedom itſelf. Let us therefore always remember St. *Paul's* caution. *If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not conſumed one of another* †: and behave ſuitably to St. *Peter's* rule, *as free, yet not uſing our liberty for a cloak of maliciouſneſs, but as the ſervants of God* ‡.

Theſe then are the inſtructions, which the dreadful judgment, this day commemorated, affords us: to *fear God, honour*

* Prov. xvii. 14. † Gal. v. 15. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 16.

nour the king, and not meddle with them that are given to change *; but *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godlineſs and honeſty* †. The tranſgreſſion of theſe duties, was, by the natural conſequences of things, and the juſt permiſſion of heaven, the cauſe, on the peoples part, of thoſe terrible calamities, under which our anceſtors groaned ſo long; and were made to *learn righteouſneſs*, not as we, by experience of others, but by heavy ſufferings of their own. To theſe, however, God in his good time graciouſly put an end: and re-eſtabliſhing our ancient form of government, hath, by a wonderful ſucceſſion of kind providences, preſerved it, through innumerable dangers, from abroad and at home, to this day. Nor perhaps, with all the faults of the preſent age, which God knows are neither few nor ſmall ones, would it be eaſy for us to fix on almoſt any other time or country, in which we could, with reaſon, rather have made it our choice to live. Let us therefore join gratitude for his mercies with fear of his judgments; and be moved by both, to piety and virtue, public and private. He hath given us great and frequent proofs of his readineſs to ſave and protect us; together with ſome few moſt deſerved inſtances of diſpleaſure and puniſhment; thus placing before our eyes, and leaving to our choice, the happineſs of a religious, loyal and moral people, or the miſeries of a profane, rebellious, and wicked one. *Now, therefore*, to conclude in the words of the prophet *Samuel*, *If ye will fear the Lord, and ſerve him, and obey his voice; then ſhall both ye, and the king that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God. But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel againſt his commandment: then ſhall the hand of the Lord be againſt you, as it was againſt your fathers* ‡.

* Prov. xxiv. 21. † 1 Tim. ii. 2. ‡ 1 Sam. xii. 13, 14, 15.

SER-

SERMON CXXVIII.

(Preached in the Pariſh Church of St. *James, Weſtminſter, November* 27. 1737, being the *Sunday* after the Death of her Majeſty the late Queen *Caroline*.)

The Advantages of Visiting the Mansions of Distress.

Eccles. vii. 4.

The heart of the wiſe is in the houſe of mourning.

THE providence of God is one great inſtrument, which he uſes for our inſtruction; and every diſpenſation of it is fitted to convey very uſeful admonitions to perſons of attentive minds. But the mournful events of things have a peculiar force to excite recollection and ſerious thought; to place our condition here, in a juſt and ſtrong light before our eyes; to awaken ſentiments within us, of piety and reſignation, humanity and compaſſion; and prompt us to make theſe the rule of our conduct. So long as nothing alarms us, we grow too commonly negligent and inconſiderate; forget our dangers, forget our mercies; give up our hearts to every paſſion that ſeizes on them; and thus are often led to do great harm, both to others and ourſelves. But *when the judgments of God are in the earth, then the inhabitants of the world learn righteouſneſs* *. When *the voice of the Lord crieth unto the city, Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it* †: then *the ears*

* Iſa. xxvi. 9. † Mic. vi. 9.

ears of them that hear ſhall hearken; the heart alſo of the raſh ſhall underſtand knowledge *. But of all the ſtrokes of God's hand, that which carries the greateſt awe with it, is death; *the ſentence of the Lord over all fleſh* †. The ſight or the thought of that important change, from the conſtitution of our nature, makes very ſtrong impreſſions upon us; and the longer we revolve the ſubject in our minds, the more reaſon we find to be deeply affected by it, and act with a continual view to it. Nothing therefore would influence us more effectually to *apply our hearts unto wiſdom* ‡; if it were not for this one circumſtance, that being ſurrounded with daily inſtances of mortality, they are familiarized to us in ſuch a manner by their frequency, that though in reaſon they ought to have the greater effect upon us for their number, yet in fact they have uſually little or none, unleſs there be ſomething either in their nearneſs to us, or their public importance, to diſtinguiſh them from common caſes, and engage a more intereſting attention to them. We ſhould therefore be very careful never to miſs the opportunity of improving ourſelves by due reflexions on ſuch deaths, as our own particular concern in them, or the general one, makes conſiderable; but, how great ſoever our loſs be otherwiſe, reſolve to gain this advantage notwithſtanding, that *by the ſadneſs of the countenance our heart ſhall become better* §.

For ſo valuable a purpoſe, it is well worth while to bear with all the gloomineſs of *the houſe of mourning*; to place ourſelves voluntarily in it a while, and return thither from time to time; deliver ourſelves up to ſuch meditations, as we find it fitted to inſpire; and dwell upon them ſomewhat longer, than the firſt unavoidable impreſſions oblige us. For moſt uſeful leſſons will *the heart of the wiſe* be able to learn there; and excellent rules of conduct, with reſpect to himſelf, to the memory of thoſe who are deceaſed, and to ſuch as they have left behind them.

1. With reſpect to himſelf. *Death is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart* ‖. It is becauſe we do not *lay it to our hearts*, that we moſt of us go on juſt as if we

* Iſa. xxxii. 3, 4. † Eccluſ xli. 3. ‡ Pſ. xc. 12.
§ Eccluſ vii. 3. ‖ Eccleſ. vii. 2.

we imagined there was to be no end at all; and though we do not indeed ſpeculatively think ſo, yet we live and act upon that ſuppoſition; and our knowing it to be a falſe one hath no manner of influence, for want of reflecting upon it as ſuch. Hence we indulge our ſouls in vehement deſires, and fill our days with endleſs projects; every point gained, opening an inlet for more to be aimed at; every failure, redoubling our earneſtneſs to recover our loſt ground; and we never recollect, how life is waſting under us all the while. Even to the departure of others before our eyes we attend, only as an opportunity of framing and following new ſchemes; and thus the death of our fellow-creatures proves an occaſion of our forgetting the more entirely, that we ſhall ever die ourſelves. This could not be, would we but ſtop a little at *the houſe of mourning*; and make the moſt obvious of all reflexions there, from contemplating the end of others, how very quickly our own end may come, and how ſoon it muſt. Such thoughts will enliven our diligence in performing our duty here; in *working, while it is day, the works of him that ſent us* *. For how ſuddenly ſoever the night may overtake us thus employed; *bleſſed is that ſervant whom his Lord, when he comes, ſhall find ſo doing* †. But the ſame ſort of meditations muſt ſurely moderate, beyond all things, our warmth in every other purſuit; and diſpoſe us, inſtead of plunging inconſiderately forwards, till in the midſt of our buſtle we drop unexpectedly into the grave; rather to ſecure the preſent time, for recollecting, before we go out of the world, what our behaviour hath been hitherto in it: that ſo we may endeavour to correct our miſtakes, ſupply our omiſſions, perfect our faith and repentance; and through God's grace, which alone can enable us, form ourſelves into ſuch a temper of mind, *that we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blameleſs* ‡.

And as the thoughts of death are excellently fitted to compoſe the vehemence of our other paſſions, ſo they are fitted particularly to check that very ſinful kind of vehemence, which we are exceedingly prone to expreſs, one againſt another. Whoever will but conſider of how ſhort a duration our exiſtence here is, and with how great a number of unavoidable ſufferings

* John ix. 4. † Matth. xxiv. 46. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 14.

ſufferings it is filled, will be thoroughly convinced, that there is no manner of need for us to load the *few and evil days** of our fellow-creatures with additional uneaſineſſes, but great occaſion to give one another all the comfort we can; and live as friendly as poſſible, whilſt we ſtay together, with thoſe from whom we are to part ſo ſoon, and appear before the father of all, who will treat us, as we have treated our brethren.

Another inſtruction, which *the heart of the wiſe* will learn *in the houſe of mourning*, is, never to flatter himſelf with expectations of any laſting good in a ſtate ſo uncertain as this. For let the proſpect appear as fair as it will; yet beſides a multitude of other things to deſtroy it, every ſingle inſtance of death reminds us, that our own lives may fail; that their lives, in whom our happineſs is placed, or on whom our hopes depend, may fail; and even thoſe, who ſeem to ſtand at a great diſtance from us, may overturn, by their fall, the whole edifice, which our forward imagination had erected. Undoubtedly the dreams, which men indulge, of enjoying more in the world than it hath to beſtow on them, are mighty pleaſing ones for a while. But from the firſt they do us harm; they give us a different turn of mind, from what our Maker intended we ſhould have; and when a diſappointment comes; then laſting wretchedneſs immediately ſucceeds our ſhort-lived felicity. For, whether we continue in a ſtate of dejection; or whether we repeat the ſame folly; expect again, and are again deceived; either way we are miſerable. Or could we eſcape with ever ſo little uneaſineſs, or enjoy in this manner ever ſo much pleaſure here; yet ſetting our hearts on that, as our portion, and ſeeking our happineſs where God hath not placed it, can never end well for us. And therefore we ſhould contemplate with care every diſpenſation of providence, that may warn us againſt ſo fatal a miſtake; and hearken diligently to that voice, with which God hath appointed that every thing on earth ſhall cry aloud to us: *Ariſe ye, and depart: for this is not your reſt* †. So far from it indeed, ſo abſolutely incapable is the preſent world of giving us any ſecurity for any one enjoyment, that the higheſt and the loweſt

* Gen. xlvii. 9. † Mic. ii. 10.

perſons in it are quite upon a level in this reſpect; equally unable to promiſe the leaſt thing with certainty, either to themſelves or to others. Whatever is human, is alike precarious; and our only ſure dependence is on the power that made us. *Put not your truſt in princes, nor in any child of man: for there is no help in them. Their breath goeth forth; they return to their earth: in that very day their thoughts periſh. Bleſſed is he, that hath the God of Jacob for his help; whoſe hope is in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, the ſea and all that is therein; which keepeth truth for ever* *. A world, like this, cannot be the ſeat of happineſs; yet our gracious Creator and Father certainly deſigned us to be happy. And therefore, the leſs proviſion he hath made for it here, the ſurer we may be, that a better ſtate remains in reſerve. It is true, indeed, we are all ſinners; and from our own deſerts, could have little ground of comfort in looking beyond the grave. But we have it abundantly from the aſſurance of forgiveneſs, on moſt equitable terms, in Jeſus Chriſt; *who hath brought life and immortality to light* †, and *delivered them, who, through fear of death, were all their life time ſubject to bondage* ‡. Here then it is, that the uncertainty of life, and every thing in it, directs us to fix; on the firm foundation of faith in the goſpel of our bleſſed Redeemer. Secured, by him, of future bliſs, in proportion to the preſent afflictions, which we bear as we ought, we ſhall paſs through them all, not only with compoſed, but cheerful reſignation: the more ſteadfaſtly we look on the dark ſide of objects, the clearer light will ariſe to us out of them; and the trueſt conſolation from *the houſe of mourning*.

You ſee, therefore, what improvement *the heart of the wiſe* may receive from a general conſideration of *the end of all men*. But the further view, of the different ends of different men, is a ſubject of yet further advantage. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedneſs; but the righteous hath hope in his death* §. The former of theſe reflections is indeed a very dreadful, but a very inſtructive one. For whether we ſet before our eyes the dying terrors of an ill perſon, whoſe conſcience

* Pſ. cxlvi. 3—6.
† 2 Tim. i. 10.
‡ Heb. ii. 15.
§ Prov. xiv. 32.

ſcience is awakened too late, or the fatal inſenſibility of one *hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin**, and going to *lie down in ſorrow* †, without the leaſt apprehenſion of it, no admonition can be either ſtronger or more important, than that which both theſe caſes naturally convey. But the death of the righteous gives inſtruction unattended with horror; and the ſerioufneſs which it inſpires, is pleaſing and peaceful. In one way, indeed, of conſidering things, the departure of good and virtuous perſons from amongſt men, is matter of moſt melancholy reflection. Their number is very ſmall, and their uſe is very great. They *are the ſalt of the earth* ‡, that preſerve ſociety from utter corruption and diſſolution. And though the generality of the world hath little regard to this, and is much more apt to depreciate the merit of ſuch, than to think of the good they do, or the evils they prevent, yet the example and influence of but a few of them, diſtributed amongſt the reſt of mankind, is a thing of much benefit: and when any of them are qualified with eminent abilities, and placed by Providence in ſtations of importance, there are times when their life may be a bleſſing of incredible extent, and their death prove the means of opening a breach for unknown miſchiefs to ruſh in. *Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaſeth: for the faithful fail from among the children of men* §. *The righteous periſheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and the merciful are taken away; none conſidering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come* ‖. Such reflections as theſe, it may perhaps appear wiſdom rather to drive from us, than invite them to diſquiet us. But it is always wiſe to think of whatever it is poſſible to prevent: and a reformation of national ſins is the plain method to prevent the coming of national calamities, as the reformation of ourſelves is to prevent our being, upon the whole, the worſe for them, if they ſhould come. Whatever human ſupports may at any time fail, God will always ſupport that people who place a virtuous truſt in him. Or though a nation were growing, in appearance, incorrigibly bad, yet they who are careful to preſerve themſelves from the ſpreading infection, particularly by prudent

* Heb. iii. 13. † Iſa. l. 11. ‡ Matth. v. 13.
§ Pſ. xii. 1. ‖ Iſa. lvii. 1.

prudent meditations on the threatening removal of valuable perſons, may poſſibly be thus excited to ſuch uſefulneſs, as will defer, if not hinder, its ruin; at leaſt they take the way to *deliver their own ſouls**, undoubtedly from the puniſhments of another life, and perhaps alſo, wholly or in part, from ſufferings in this. *The days of man are like a ſhadow, that declineth; and he witheretb like the graſs. But the Lord is the ſame; and his years ſhall have no end. The children of his ſervants ſhall continue; and their ſeed ſhall ſtand faſt in his ſight* †.

Be the loſs, therefore, otherwiſe as great as it will, which befalls, at any time, either the public in general, or ourſelves in particular, when the hand of God ſnatches away the worthy and the eminent, yet thinking ſeriouſly and rightly upon it, we may certainly extract more than a little good from it. And whoever is taught effectually, by ſuch an occurrence, to *ceaſe from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils* ‡, and place his expectations and hopes in the ever-living God, far from being overwhelmed by the melancholy part of the event, will be able, with a very conſiderable degree of compoſedneſs, to contemplate and improve by the enlivening and comforting parts.

Amongſt others, it ſurely is one very great comfort, to ſee or to hear of that diſtinguiſhing tranquillity, with which religious perſons meet their approaching diſſolution. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace* §. Sometimes, indeed, fears and doubts, ariſing from the influence of a diſordered body, cloud the mind of the righteous at their death, and obſcure their ſetting ſun. Nor is it uſeleſs to take notice even of theſe caſes, for our future ſatisfaction, if ever the like ſhould be our own, that our covenant-right to God's favour may be very well grounded, notwithſtanding, for the preſent, we are quite incapable of ſeeing and *rejoicing in the light of his countenance* ‖. But when the pious ſoul enjoys, in that hour, its genuine ſerenity, then is the beauty of holineſs beheld in the ſtrongeſt point of view. Then we have a noble opportunity of diſcerning what religion

* Ezek. xiv. 14. † Pſ. ciii. 15, 27, 28. ‡ Iſ. ii. 22.
§ Pſ. xxxvii. 37. ‖ Pſ. lxxxix. 16.

gion is, and what it can do, when we obſerve the manner in which it enables thoſe, who are ſupported by it, to poſſeſs themſelves in the face of death. When we ſee them, in the ſtrength of it, joining the tendereſt affections to thoſe whom they leave behind, with the quieteſt ſubmiſſion to part with them; and the moſt virtuous reaſons for wiſhing to ſtay longer here, with the moſt dutiful obedience to him who calls them away: when we ſee them calmly diveſting themſelves of their deareſt attachments to life; and only ſolicitous to provide, by ſerious advice and kind recommendations, for the happineſs of thoſe who ſurvive them: in the midſt of the acuteſt pains, *waiting*, with the mildeſt patience, *all the days of their appointed time* *; and preſerving a greater ſenſibility of every ones ſufferings than their own: ſhewing themſelves now, what they always were; but riſing in their virtues proportionably to their trial; and teſtifying that *their faith is the victory that overcometh the world* †: ſuch occaſions, as God knows they had need bring ſome advantage with them, furniſh us with uncommon means of learning, in the chambers of death, what are the true principles for the conduct of life. But,

II. The *heart of the wiſe*, whilſt it dwells *in the houſe of mourning*, will not only improve itſelf in a general ſenſe of Chriſtian piety, but alſo more eſpecially, in ſuch precepts of it as conſtitute a proper behaviour with reſpect to the memory of thoſe whoſe departure is at any time the object of our thoughts. The dead, indeed, are out of our reach: our goodneſs extends not to them, and our enmity can do them no harm. But for the ſake of common juſtice and humanity, we are bound to the amiable duties, of ſhewing candour in regard to their failings, and paying the honour which is due to their merit.

That we ſhould ſpeak and think with mildneſs, concerning ſuch as partake of our own nature, and are in nothing more like us, than in the frailties to which they may be liable, this is what all men, at all times, have a right to claim from us. But they who *have finiſhed their courſe* ‡, and *whoſe dwelling is no* longer *with fleſh* §, they ſeem to have a peculiar exemption

* Job xiv. 4. † 1 John v. 4.
‡ Acts xx. 24. 2 Tim. iv. 7. § Dan. ii. 12.

emption from thoſe ſeverities of cenſure, which amongſt the living are ſo much too liberally diſtributed and returned. Not that good and bad characters are to be confounded after death, any more than before it; or *the wicked to be as the righteous* * in that reſpect, or any other. But yet, not even the crimes of ſuch as have been worſe offenders than ordinary, ſhould be related with aggravation and inſult, or indeed be mentioned at all, more than the intereſts of virtue and mankind require. Much leſs are we at liberty to trample on the aſhes of perſons, on the whole religious and virtuous, or receive accuſations againſt them, of which very poſſibly a great part may chiefly, or entirely, proceed from invention or miſtake, from ignorance of facts, or inattention to circumſtances, or weakneſs of judgment. Nay, indeed, we ought not to dwell upon the failings with which we have the beſt reaſon to apprehend they were chargeable, ſo as to give theſe for their character, but caſt a veil over their imperfections, in reverence to their eſtimable qualities. Towards the living this is our duty; but if we fail of it towards the dead, nothing can excuſe us. The thought of that awful change, which they have undergone, might alone be ſufficient to calm every emotion and prejudice that we may formerly have felt againſt them. But beſides, all the provocations that we can have received from them, are now at an end. In whatever they have interfered with us, they will do ſo no more. Whatever we have thought blameable in them, the cognizance, whether it be or not, is removed to a higher tribunal. They are gone to anſwer for their deeds: we ſhall very ſhortly follow to anſwer for ours: let us judge one another with that mercy with which may our Lord and Maſter judge us all. And let us remember too, that in a worldly way of conſidering things, this is the diſcreet method. *Rejoice not over thy greateſt enemy, when dead; but remember that we die all* †. Soon will the time come, when our names alſo ſhall lie expoſed to ſuch uſage as the ſurvivors may think fit to give them. And therefore the conſideration of what is *the end of all men*, ſhould make us much too prudent, ever to ſet an example of poſthumous rancour; and incline us, by treating the

6 memories

* Gen. xviii. 25. † Eccluſ viii. 7.

memories of others with generous tenderneſs, to ſecure the ſame treatment to our own hereafter.

The next duty of which mortality ſhould remind us, towards the deceaſed, is paying juſt honour to their virtues. Honour is a debt, owing indeed to worthy characters in this world; but ſeldom well paid, till after they are gone out of it. As ſoon as it is too late, we begin to perceive, that they deſerved to have been much more highly valued than they were. And we ſhould all of us learn from hence, to eſteem thoſe for the future, whilſt they are alive, whom we ſhall eſteem when they are dead. But at leaſt, when they have completed the part aſſigned them here, and performed the principal ſcenes of it well, then it becomes high time that thoſe applauſes ſhould be given them, which were their due before; and their memory be put in poſſeſſion of whatever they ought to have perſonally enjoyed. Flattering the dead will do neither them, nor indeed their reputation, any ſervice; or, if it could, would do, at the ſame time, much harm to mankind, by taking away diſtinction, where it ought to be preſerved. But as the deſire of leaving behind us an honourable reputation, when we have earned it, is naturally a ſtrong principle in virtuous breaſts, and a very uſeful one to human ſociety, it ſhould be carefully cheriſhed, by allowing to every degree of real deſert its proper acknowledgment, and uſing the only means that we have, of making thoſe yet alive, who in every other reſpect are dead to us. The true immortality God beſtows on his faithful ſervants, and them alone, in another world: but we ſhould give in this all that we are able, the poor ſhadow of it, an honeſt fame, to as many as are entitled to it, in their reſpective ſhares. Whoever hath gone through life with only a benevolent heart and upright intention, though it be in a private rank, hath merit conſiderable enough not to be ſoon forgotten. And in proportion as other things concur to raiſe the characters of men, they ſhould be reſpected both more and longer. Whenever, therefore, the virtues of any perſons have been adorned by nature with uncommon accompliſhments, and by themſelves with valuable acquiſitions: when they have been called out by Providence into the view of mankind; have reſiſted the greateſt temptations; appeared equal, without effort, to the greateſt difficul-

ties; filled with diffuſive beneficence the largeſt ſphere of public life, and yet paid the moſt accurate and amiable regard to the various duties of private relations: when they have ſpent their days in this manner, and finiſhed them in the manner deſcribed before, then the prudent in heart will regret their loſs with the deepeſt concern, and *have them in everlaſting remembrance* *. But,

III. We may learn, from a conſiderate meditation on the examples of mortality, very uſeful inſtructions for our behaviour, not only with reſpect to the deceaſed, but thoſe whom they have left behind, any way peculiarly related to them.

The death of a wife and good, of a near and affectionate friend, is unſpeakably the greateſt of all calamities. One ſingle ſtroke of this kind may deſtroy almoſt the whole comfort of our lives at once; and a very few of them leave us in the moſt dreadful of ſolitudes; deſtitute of any one to entruſt with full confidence, amidſt numbers to ſuſpect and fear; deſtitute of help againſt our own frailties and infirmities; and vaſtly more miſerable for having been happy. Whoever is capable of theſe reflections, if he allows himſelf time to make them, will ſincerely pity all that have ſuffered ſuch a loſs, and equally eſteem all that ſhew they are ſenſible of it. Right affections are the very foundation of a right character: and affection continued to be expreſſed, in the manner it ought, for friends and relations at and after their deaths, carries in it an evident mark both of ſincerity and ſtrength. When, inſtead of drawing from the mournful ſcene, perſons fix their hearts entirely upon it; fulfil to the very utmoſt the whole *labour of love* †, to which Providence then calls them; and, after all proves fruitleſs, transfer their concern in a proper degree to the ſupport of their partners in ſorrow, each evidencing their conſciouſneſs of the others worth, by a mutual tenderneſs that goes through them all: the knowledge of this behaviour, in any ſtation of life, muſt needs fill our minds with great honour and regard for ſuch as feel affliction in ſo exemplary a manner; and diſpoſe us effectually to avoid whatever may increaſe their ſufferings, and do whatever may alleviate them. But eſpecially thoſe whom we are bound to reverence

* Pſal. cxii. 6. † Heb. vi. 10.

reverence at all times, we ſhould reverence doubly in their diſtreſs; and thoſe for whom at all times we are bound to pray, we ſhould then with uncommon earneſtneſs recommend to *the God of all comfort* *. Let us, therefore, accordingly at preſent beſeech him, that he would be merciful to that houſe which is now peculiarly *the houſe of mourning*: that he would be merciful to theſe nations which have the juſteſt cauſe to ſhare in all their griefs; that he would *turn from us thoſe evils that we moſt righteouſly have deſerved*; and continue to us thoſe bleſſings, which through his infinite goodneſs we enjoy. Grant theſe our petitions, gracious God, for the ſake of thy ever-bleſſed Son, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

* 2 Cor. i. 3.

SERMON CXXIX.

(Preached in the Pariſh Church of St. *Bridget*, *London*, before the Right Honourable the Lord-Mayor, *&c.* on *Monday* in *Eaſter Week*, 1738.)

On Christian Beneficence and Liberality.

1 Pet. iv. 10.

As every man hath received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God.

THE inducements that we have to relieve the miſeries, and promote the happineſs of our fellow-creatures, are, God be thanked, both many in number, and of various kinds. Our hearts naturally incline us to it; our reaſon approves of it as right. The more we cultivate kind diſpoſitions, the truer peace we poſſeſs within; and the greater capacity of ſocial happineſs, the ſweeteſt part of the enjoyment of life. Willingneſs to do good, is always rewarded with the eſteem of mankind; and ſelfiſhneſs of temper, the conſtant object of every ones averſion. We have frequent experience in ourſelves what ſuffering is; and are therefore inexcuſable, if we overlook it in others. We live in a world, where, if it were not for the exerciſe of mercy and pity, the face of things would look dreadful with miſerable objects; and the multitudes of perſons driven to deſpair, make ſociety unſafe. Beſides, we know the viciſſitudes of human affairs; and are nearly concerned to encourage, by our example, that ſpirit of goodneſs and compaſſion, of which we or ours may, on one occaſion or another, eaſily come to have great need.

Theſe

Theſe are powerful motives to beneficence; and yet the influence of them is too commonly exceeding ſmall. The hearts of ſome perſons have but little ſenſibility; and thoſe of others, a very confined and partial one. Some content themſelves with talking of benevolence, inſtead of cultivating it; or with the inward feeling of good affections, inſtead of exerting them; and others give ſcope to their wrong inclinations, and their right ones, promiſcuouſly; and ſo eaſily do more harm in the world, than good. To ſpeculative reaſonings but few perſons attend; and fewer ſtill are governed by them in practice. Their liableneſs to the common accidents of life, men either forget amidſt the pleaſures of it, or turn into an argument for attending the more cloſely to their own intereſts. As for reputation, a few acts of goodneſs, well managed, will obtain as much of it as they are concerned about. Or, if they cannot be eſteemed, they may hope at leaſt to be courted. And even if they fail of this, they can affect to deſpiſe it, and appear, notwithſtanding, happy; ſome in their wealth, ſome in their voluptuouſneſs.

Our wiſe and good Maker hath therefore not left us to the influence of theſe motives only; but, as he ſaw it neceſſary, that in all our ways we ſhould be directed by regard to him; ſo he hath added infinite force to the above-mentioned conſiderations, by giving us the knowledge of himſelf, and teaching us to look on them as evidences of his will. He undoubtedly deſigned the good things of this world, not for the gratification of a few of his creatures; but for the benefit of all. And he hath divided them unequally amongſt us; not that one part of the human race ſhould ſink under miſery and want, and the other look down with contempt upon them; but that pity and gratitude ſhould be mutually exerciſed, and the pleaſure of doing and receiving good, felt among men; that the poor ſhould be ſerviceable to the rich; they, in return, kind to the poor; and both united in the bonds of mutual good-will, from a ſenſe of their mutual dependency. Theſe, it appears from the knowledge that we have of his nature, muſt have been his intentions. The ſame thing appears further from the nature he hath given us, and the circumſtances in which he hath placed us. But that no ſort of evidence of it might be wanting, he hath made known to the world

world his pleaſure by expreſs revelation alſo; requiring of us all *to do good, and to communicate* *, both as we are ſervants, bound in every thing to obey him; and as we are ſtewards, appointed and entruſted by him for this very purpoſe.

Let us therefore conſider, with due ſerioufneſs,

I. What general influence it ſhould have upon us, that we are *ſtewards of the manifold grace of God.*

II. What influence in particular with reſpect to thoſe methods of charity, which are the occaſion of our preſent meeting.

I. Let us conſider the general influence. Every thing, which God hath done for the good of his creatures, is *grace* or favour to them; and every thing, which he has placed in our hands for their good, is grace of which we are ſtewards. All the means and opportunities we have of making the world, or any part of it, better or happier; by our knowledge or wealth, by our power or intereſt, our care and pains, our friendly behaviour or good example, are given us in truſt, to be ſo exerciſed. How *manifold* theſe are, upon the whole, it is not perhaps eaſy for us to be fully ſenſible; but we ſhould each of us think very carefully, what his own ſhare of them is, and wherein it conſiſts. For no one is without his *talent*, though ſome have more committed to them than others; and they who have leaſt, will be expected to improve what they have †; as our Saviour's parable very awfully ſhews. The pooreſt perſon in the world, is capable of being uſeful, ſome way, to his fellow-creatures; and the greateſt can never be above the obligation of imitating, to their power, the beneficence of their Creator. They who are engaged in buſineſs, far from having their attention confined to themſelves, have uſually, by the very means of their buſineſs, peculiar advantages both for knowing and ſupplying the wants of others. And ſuch as have no particular employment, have only the privilege of a freer choice, what part they will take in that general one aſſigned to us all, of doing good.

Since then we are appointed, each in his proper ſtation, diſpenſers and *ſtewards of the manifold grace of God*, it concerns

* Heb. xiii. 16. † Matth. xxv. 14.—30.

cerns us to behave as faithful ones: not to intercept the ſtreams of the divine bounty; nor confine, to our own gratification, what our Maker hath deſigned for the common benefit of all around us. He hath not indeed fixed the proportions of any kind of charity; for circumſtances vary ſo infinitely, that general rules concerning ſuch matters are impoſſible. And this latitude ſhould not give anxiety to any good mind; for we ſerve a moſt equitable maſter. But neither ſhould it give encouragement to bad minds; and make them imagine, that where nothing is aſcertained, they may do juſt as little as they pleaſe. For God will expect from every one, what may be reaſonably expected from them; and hath left this matter at large, that we may ſhew, not our backwardneſs to ſerve him, but our zeal. Imprudent zeal he never approves; but goodneſs, confined within the bounds of diſcretion, is always more acceptable to him, in proportion as it is more abundant. And, though not every failure in degree ſhall expoſe us to puniſhment; yet *he which ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap alſo ſparingly: and he which ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap alſo bountifully* *.

However unactive therefore we may naturally be; yet, as perſons entruſted by the Lord of all, it imports us greatly to be diligent. For induſtry is a valuable part of faithfulneſs; and *ſlothful ſervants* will be conſidered, in the day of judgment as *wicked* ones †. Some ways of doing good may poſſibly be leſs pleaſing to us; ſome perſons our prejudices, our paſſions, or intereſts, would tempt us to overlook, rather than ſerve; and ſome things, that are only ſeeming inſtances of benevolence, we ſhould be willing to miſtake for real ones; and indulge a falſe good nature, without regard to conſequences, however bad. But when we conſider, that in all theſe caſes we are to act for God, this makes a very great change in the view of things; and may both oblige us at ſome times *to do with our might* ‡, what perhaps we could leaſt have wiſhed; and reſtrain us, at others, from doing at all, what injudiciouſly we ſhould have deſired the moſt. Another important uſe of looking upon ourſelves in this light is, that how great ſoever our talents may be, and how right ſoever the uſe that we

* 2 Cor. ix. 6. † Matth. xxv. 26. ‡ Eccl. ix. 10.

we make of them; it muſt ſtill be the ſtrongeſt reaſon poſſible for humility, one of the moſt excellent of virtues, to think, that all we have is given us, and all we do is but *miniſtering*. Then, at the ſame time that our being entruſted will teach us theſe things, our being jointly entruſted will teach us another; never to invade each other's province, nor *ſtretch ourſelves beyond our meaſure* *; *but as God hath diſtributed to every man ſo to walk* †: *for he is not the author of confuſion, but of peace* ‡. God is the judge, and a much better ſurely than we, what employment is fitteſt for each of his ſervants; and how enterprizing ſoever any of us may be now, or how diſcontented ſoever with the narrowneſs of our own ſphere of action, we may have cauſe enough to be glad at laſt, that no more was committed to our care. Yet theſe reflexions muſt not be carried to ſuch a length, as to let the buſineſs of our common maſter ſuffer, under pretence of its belonging, not to us, but our fellow-ſervant; when there is no impropriety, but only ſomewhat more labour or expence, in ſtepping a little out of our way, to prevent the ill conſequences of another's neglect. It muſt be owned a difficult matter, not to miſtake in theſe caſes on one ſide or the other; but involuntary miſtakes will never be imputed to us. It muſt be owned a very ſerious thing, to be *ſtewards of God*: but it is a very noble one, to be employed under our heavenly Father in the work, that he delights in moſt; and for the happineſs of our brethren, perhaps to all eternity. If indeed we are found, inſtead of this, either hiding the talents committed to us §, or waſting our maſter's goods ‖, or miſuſing thoſe to whom we ought to have miniſtered ¶; then miſerable will our condition be, when God ſhall ſay to us, *Give an account of thy ſtewardſhip, for thou mayeſt be no longer ſteward* **. But on the other hand, our comfort is, that a ſincere endeavour to diſcharge our office as we ought, whatever our difficulties, or whatever our imperfections be, ſhall entitle us to the ſentence, *Well done, good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* ††.

With

* 2 Cor x. 14. † 1 Cor. vii. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 33.
§ Matth. xxv. 18. ‖ Luke xvi. 1. ¶ Matth. xxiv. 49.
** Luke xvi. 2. †† Matth. xxv. 23.

With the impreſſion therefore of theſe reflexions upon our minds, let us now proceed to inquire,

II. What influence the thought, that we are *ſtewards of the manifold grace of God*, ſhould have upon us, with reſpect to thoſe particular methods of doing good, which are the occaſion of our preſent meeting.

Now theſe are of three ſorts, which indeed comprehend almoſt the whole of public charity: places of maintenance and inſtruction for children; hoſpitals for the ſick; and houſes of correction and work for the diſſolute and idle.

Relieving poor parents from the burden of a family, which they are unable to ſupport, muſt needs be a moſt welcome charity to them; and is evidently a very uſeful one to the public; for it tends to the future increaſe of the community, as well as to make the preſent members of it happy. And teaching poor children religion and virtue, one ſhould think were plainly a beneficial thing too. For let it prove ineffectual as often as it will; they muſt be a little more likely to abſtain from what is wrong, for being taught what is right. Some principles, ſome notions of life and behaviour, they will learn; which then would you have them learn, good or bad? They may indeed poſſibly learn bad things mixed with good, under the notion of religion. But conſidering the purity, in which religion is profeſſed amongſt us, there cannot well be much of this kind; and there needs not be any thing. Some perſons, however, appear to have great fears of ſuperſtition; and no fears of any thing elſe. But do they really find in fact, that this is the reigning and dangerous error of the preſent age? Is it with ſuperſtition, that your ſervants, and your children as they grow up, and the generality of the people, are infected; or is it not with profligateneſs: ſuch open and avowed contempt of the laws of God and man, of all ſobriety and order, as this nation hath never known before, nor can long ſubſiſt under an increaſe of it? But if you are in earneſt afraid of ſuperſtition, be afraid where you have cauſe of fear. There is a real, and a dreadful ſuperſtition gaining ground, that of the church of *Rome*. And the more ignorant men are of all religion, and the more prejudiced againſt their own form and their own teachers of religion; the more eaſily they are won over into that moſt corrupt and

formidable communion. Think then, I intreat you, what would our condition be, ſhould ever the main part of this nation become, one half Papiſts, and the other Profligates! For as to the ſcheme of virtue without religion; even if it could be put in practice, yet there is a God, and he ought to be feared; and there is a ſupport in piety, of which mankind ought not to be deprived. But whoever knows any thing of the world, muſt ſee, that ſuch a ſcheme can never be put in practice: that human nature hath daily need, both to be reſtrained from evil, and excited to good, in caſes where none but religious motives can do either effectually. And as they have been conſtantly found neceſſary in all ages and countries whatever; ſo they are certainly of the moſt indiſpenſable neceſſity, where incentives to vice are in the greateſt abundance, and liberty is the leaſt controlled by law.

But to return. Together with the general rules of their duty, theſe children are taught ſuch other knowledge, as may qualify them for employments fitted to their ſtation; and then put out to ſuch employments; with a further aſſiſtance, where it is requiſite, of ſome little matter to begin with, towards gaining a livelihood. And this alſo ſurely muſt be of public benefit. Were they indeed either taken or kept away from other buſineſs, more uſeful, or in which hands are more wanted; were they raiſed, without viſible merit, above their original rank, into one of leſs labour or more knowledge, to the prejudice of thoſe, who were by birth their ſuperiors: ſuch things would be juſt objections, though not to the inſtitution of theſe ſchools, yet to the management of them. But when only the parents are kept from diſtreſs, and the children from idleneſs or wicked courſes; when care is taken, to chooſe them for a condition ſuitable to that, for which they are deſigned; and neither in their manner of living, nor their inſtruction, to ſet them above that; every one will allow, it would be excellent private charity, to do this for a child; and why not as good public charity, to do it for many children; ſince the greater the number is, the leſs in proportion the expence?

The ſecond method of doing good, before us at preſent, is that of hoſpitals for the ſick. And whatever objections may be made againſt other benefactions to the poor, there can be

none againſt reſtoring eaſe and health to them; againſt giving them thoſe helps, which their diſtreſſed families cannot give; and enabling them to be uſeful again to themſelves, and to the public. Now hoſpitals are infinitely the beſt means to this neceſſary end. They are a ſure way of detecting counterfeits: they preſerve the ſick from unſkilful hands: they are ſo many public ſchools, where the knowledge of medicine is taught, in the moſt effectual manner, for the common benefit of mankind. They relieve multitudes, who either cannot demand, or cannot obtain, parochial relief; and they do it, beyond compariſon, in the ſureſt, the ſpeedieſt, and the cheapeſt manner that can be. So that, were we to ſuppoſe even great miſmanagements in hoſpitals; they would ſtill remain preferable to all other methods of providing for the ſick; and yet the numbers and characters of the governors of our preſent hoſpitals, ſecure them, as far as may be, againſt any miſmanagement at all. Another advantage is, that ever ſo little given to this kind of charity, hath its proportionable good effect; and the diſeaſes and accidents, which befal the lower part of the world, are ſo many and frequent, that ever ſo much given may eaſily be employed. Then it well deſerves to be conſidered further, that ſickneſs affords a favourable opportunity for good impreſſions; and therefore moſt important ſervice may be done to poor creatures in theſe places, by ſhewing them from experience the bad conſequences of vicious lives, and the good ones of regularity; by giving them ſtrong impreſſions of the excellency of compaſſion and mercy, at the time when they are partaking of it; and awakening them to a ſenſe of what their condition requires of them, and their eternal happineſs depends upon. But the benefit of hoſpitals hath been ſo very well explained to the world of late *, and ſo generally acknowledged, that I need only add a word concerning one ſort of them, that for the diſeaſed in mind.

Theſe poor creatures are made by their diſorder, whilſt it continues, entirely uſeleſs to ſociety; and many of them, at the ſame time, exceedingly miſerable in themſelves, by the

* See Dr. *Alured Clarke*'s ſermon before the governors of the county-hoſpital at *Wincheſter*, and an account of the eſtabliſhment of that hoſpital, publiſhed in 1737.

frightful or the gloomy train of ideas that poſſeſſes their minds, and the vehement paſſions that ſo frequently agitate them. Now, when perſons in low circumſtances fall into this unhappy ſtate, as many of them do, their friends are more incapable of taking care of them than in any other caſe whatever; and there is no way of attempting their cure, which can poſſibly be attended with ſuch hope of ſucceſs, as placing them in hoſpitals appropriated to this purpoſe. Nay, indeed, when there appears no proſpect of a cure at all, to provide for them as incurables, is a moſt uſeful and excellent act of humanity: and the beginnings lately made of a proviſion of this ſort, well deſerve encouragement, and peculiarly want it.

The only kind of charity which remains to be mentioned now, is that of houſes of correction and work for the diſſolute and idle. The terror which theſe places ſtrike is one great benefit, as it prevents, at once, both crimes and the conſequences of them. But where that proves ineffectual, the next advantage of ſuch houſes is, that offenders can be immediately ſecured in them. Removed out of the way of endangering the properties, the lives, the virtue of others, and made to feel, that their attempt of gaining a livelihood by eaſier methods than honeſt people do, ſhall only ſubject them to harder labour and deſerved puniſhment. Many of them, we are aſſured, have been brought, by theſe means, to a juſt ſenſe of their intereſt and their duty: very many more, we have ſad experience, much need to have this kindneſs done them. And we cannot but know the importance, both to them and to ourſelves, of checking the growth of wickedneſs, before it is quite too late to think of attempting it.

Theſe then being the methods of charity now before you, conſider well what obligations you are under, as *ſtewards of God* for the good of your fellow-creatures, to aſſiſt in directing and ſupporting them.

Such, in the firſt place, as are qualified to govern and direct any of theſe inſtitutions, are bound, in conſcience, not to let ſo excellent deſigns receive prejudice, for want of a ſucceſſion of fit perſons to put them in execution: for they may well ſpare a little time, both from pleaſure and from buſineſs of other kinds, to employ it in a manner ſo productive of happineſs

happineſs to the world and to themſelves. And ſuch as have actually taken this good work upon them, muſt ever remember, that they are now become ſtewards of the charity of men as well as the bounty of God; and their faithfulneſs in the diſcharge of their truſt is engaged to both. They whoſe conſtant attendance cannot be expected, ſhould at leaſt acquaint themſelves ſo far with the management of things, as to know, and be able to aſſure others, that it is, in the main at leaſt, ſuch as it ought; for in many caſes this alone may be a valuable ſervice. And all who profeſs to enter further into the conduct of affairs, ſhould ſeriouſly, and frequently, and impartially conſider, what can be reformed in theſe charities, and what can be improved. A meddling ſpirit, fond of diſturbing things that are well, either to no good purpoſe, or none that can be obtained, is indeed a very miſchievous one; but prudent, peaceable endeavours, to make every thing as perfect as it can be made, are of incredible uſe. The work in which you are engaged, is a very important one: and a ſmall defect of attention, a little wrong bias or miſtaken judgment, may produce extremely unhappy effects; may diminiſh conſiderably the benefit of theſe excellent deſigns, and make even *your good evil ſpoken of**. The ſupport of voluntary charities depends entirely on their reputation; and therefore it concerns you greatly to avoid, not only every thing blameable, but every thing ſuſpicious; and to *cut off occaſion from them which deſire occaſion* † to find fault; *providing for honeſt things, not only in the ſight of the Lord, but in the ſight of all men* ‡. But more eſpecially give me leave to recommend to you, that as you are entruſted for the good of your fellow-creatures, you would have great regard to their eternal good; and that, as you are employed for the ſervice of God, you would expreſs your concern for his honour, by endeavouring conſcientiouſly to imprint a ſenſe of religion and virtue upon all that come under your care in theſe places. It is the want of religion and virtue that principally occaſions this dreadful number of diſtreſſes and diſorders in the world: and ſo long as the cauſe ſubſiſts, the effect will follow. Let your children, therefore, be carefully bred up to piety, without ſuperſtition

* Rom. xiv. 16. † 2 Cor. xi. 12. ‡ 2 Cor. viii. 21.

ſtition or uncharitableneſs; to loyalty and honeſty, to humility and induſtry. Let your ſick be inſtructed and admoniſhed, ſuitably to their capacities, their preſent condition, and paſt behaviour. And let the correction of your offenders be made as medicinal as it can; and a charitable care for reclaiming them, by proper expoſtulations and friendly advice, be joined with whatever ſeverity it is neceſſary they ſhould undergo. There are undoubtedly amongſt them great objects of pity; perſons of whom there is no cauſe to deſpair; and ſurely theſe, as far as it is poſſible, ſhould have ſome diſtinguiſhed regard ſhewn them. But ſo much regard at leaſt ſhould be ſhewn to them all, and to the public at the ſame time, if we have any concern for its welfare, as never to ſuffer places, appointed for the puniſhment of wickedneſs, to become ſchools for learning it.

And now, having taken upon me to ſay thus much to you, it is but juſtice to add, that exhortations by no means imply diſtruſt. *Having confidence in thy obedience*, ſaith St. *Paul* to *Philemon*, *I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt alſo do more than I ſay* *. And never can there be better ground for a confidence of this kind than at preſent; when theſe charities are conducted by ſo large a number of good, and wiſe, and experienced men, under the inſpection of a magiſtracy ſo worthy of honour; and over which preſides a perſon †, whoſe uncommon abilities we all ſee exerciſed every day, for the promotion of religion and virtue, of the peace and good order, the welfare and happineſs of this great city, with the moſt exemplary diſintereſtedneſs, and the trueſt prudence, the moſt active zeal, and the tendereſt humanity.

I proceed, therefore, now, with great ſatisfaction, from the duty of managing theſe charities well, to that of ſupporting them. And one way of ſupporting them is, by ſpeaking of them with the eſteem which they deſerve. Theſe public inſtitutions, and ſome of them more eſpecially, have had vehement accuſations brought againſt them by many perſons. But ſtay to inquire, and hear, before you condemn. You may poſſibly judge wrong concerning what ought to be done, and you may very probably be miſinformed concerning what is

* Philem. ver. 21. † Sir *John Barnard*.

is done. Things which have happened very ſeldom, if at all, may be told as happening frequently. Miſtakes corrected long ago, may be charged as continuing ſtill. Inconveniencies may be unjuſtly heightened; advantages unjuſtly depreciated. Should this be ſo; and ſhould the things, againſt which you are declaiming, be all the while excellently good ones, think only what harm you are doing to mankind. Perhaps, indeed, nay certainly they are not perfect: but are they not highly uſeful? Or if not, cannot they be made ſo? If they can, uſe your endeavours that they may. Shew a good meaning, and you will acquire an influence. But even ſhould you after all be unſucceſsful, ſtill reflect a ſecond time, is it not more eligible, that theſe inſtitutions ſhould continue as they are, than fall to ruin? For, ſuppoſing ſome better way might be contrived, is there any certainty, is there any proſpect, of this better way being taken? And if not, never pull down, till you are likely to build again.

But affording good words alone to charity is very inſufficient. As faithful ſtewards of the divine bounty, you muſt communicate of the wealth alſo, which is placed in your hands for that purpoſe; *and miniſter, as of the ability which God giveth* *. The importance of ſupporting theſe methods of doing good, ſo far as it appears from their general nature, you have already heard. But when you are acquainted alſo with their large and increaſing extent, and their neceſſary dependence on new benefactions every year, theſe things will be weighty additional motives to your liberality: and I intreat your compaſſionate attention to the following report of them.

Here the Report was read.

YOU have now heard the moſt forcible arguments that you well can hear, for contributing plentifully to the charities before you. Eight hundred vagrants and diſorderly perſons, confined and employed, relieved and corrected, for their own reformation, and your ſecurity; thirteen hundred poor children maintained; taught their duty to God and man, and qualified

* 1 Pet. iv. 11.

qualified for uſefulneſs to the public: thirteen thouſand ſick perſons, of whom care hath been taken in their ſickneſs. And theſe excellent eſtabliſhments, you perceive at the ſame time, cannot ſubſiſt without continual help; though, would but your bounty afford the means for it, they are capable of being greatly enlarged. Still a proviſion is wanted for multitudes of poor children; and no ſmall part of them are either taught, or reduced, to get a livelihood by wickedneſs and diſhoneſty. Still too many offenders, of more advanced years, infeſt your ſtreets. And a very large proportion of the ſick, that apply to your hoſpitals, are forced to be rejected, and left in their miſery, for want of room to receive them, or income to ſupport them. Think then, what is incumbent on you in relation to theſe things.

There are but two reaſons, and they are both very bad ones, that hinder men from being charitable according to their power: either covetouſneſs makes them unwilling; or expenſiveneſs makes them imagine they are unable.

If the former influences you conſider well, that your happineſs for ever depends on doing your duty; but your happineſs even here doth not depend on enlarging your fortunes. You may, if you will form yourſelves to it, enjoy great ſatisfaction in doing good. But what felicity can you poſſibly find, either in the conſciouſneſs of having, or the vanity of being known to have, ever ſo much wealth more than you have occaſion for? And beſides, if the enjoyment of *man's life* did *conſiſt in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſed**; charity may often be ſo contrived by prudence, as not to diminiſh wealth; and is often ſo bleſſed by heaven, as greatly to increaſe it. I am ſenſible, that you have heard theſe things, till ſome of you perhaps have brought yourſelves by degrees to be very little moved by them: but remember God will expect, that having been reminded of them ſo frequently, you ſhould regard them the more.

And if it be expenſiveneſs, that withholds you from charity, in this caſe alſo think with yourſelves: for which purpoſe it is, that your Maker hath intruſted you? For vices and follies, or for pity and mercy? You may indeed plead, that

* Luke xii. 13.

that luxury, by the numbers it employs, is perhaps the moſt extenſive beneficence. But this is a poor pretence, evidently calculated to make yourſelves eaſy in acting wrong. Undoubtedly the wiſdom of providence hath contrived, that many, who will do no good in any other way, ſhall however do ſome in this. But then it is uſually done to thoſe who need it leaſt. A number of perſons, well able to take care of themſelves otherwiſe, are maintained, part in idleneſs, part in profeſſions of no manner of uſe; whilſt the true objects of compaſſion, the infirm and helpleſs, are left unregarded, to ſuffer and periſh. Luxury therefore contributes nothing to anſwer the intent of the charities before us. And even thoſe, for whom it doth provide, it teaches at the ſame time to ruin themſelves by the imitation of it. And in proportion as it prevails, it deſtroys every where, both virtue and happineſs, public and private. But the numberleſs evils of this moſt fatal vice cannot be enlarged on now; and if the very little good, which it doth, were very much more; yet, as no one will pretend to ſay, that this good was the motive to his expenſiveneſs; it can never be a defence of it. We muſt not therefore think to make our extravagance an excuſe for the defect of our alms; or hope in the leaſt to mend our plea, by calling thoſe things neceſſaries of life, which are indeed very blameable ſuperfluities.

Let therefore both the frugal and the expenſive man ſeriouſly conſider, one, what proportion his charity bears to his increaſe; the other, to his profuſions; and each think of juſtifying themſelves, not to the world, but to God.

Poſſibly it may ſeem a good reaſon to ſome, for their own neglect of the poor, that the law makes proviſion for them. And it is certainly an honour to the law that it doth; but no honour to us, that it needs do it. Beſides, there are very many caſes of great diſtreſs, to which legal proviſion is neither eaſily, nor properly extended; nor can it give by any means ſo plentiful relief, as ſhould be given to the greater part of thoſe to whom it may extend. But ſuppoſe the law capable of doing every thing that needs be done; what would be the conſequence of leaving every thing to it? That we ſhould loſe entirely the means, which now we have, of proving to the world, and to ourſelves, the goodneſs of our own

hearts; and of making an undoubted free-will offering to God, out of what he hath given us. Perſons of bad minds may indeed take occaſion to neglect the poor, from our willingneſs to relieve them; and thus, by their fault, the burden may fall heavier upon us than it ought. But then God, who hath entruſted us, not only in conjunction with others to do our ſhare, but ſeparately by ourſelves to do what we can, *is not unrighteous to forget this our labour of love* *: but will take abundant care, that whatever we bear cheerfully on his account, far from giving us cauſe of complaint, ſhall aſſuredly be matter of great joy to us in the end.

Think then attentively of theſe conſiderations. They are not propoſed to you, for raiſing a ſudden warmth of affection, and ſerving a preſent turn; it is to your cooleſt reaſon, that this addreſs is made. Reflect in retirement on what you have heard. Act upon deliberate conviction, act from a ſettled principle, in what you do; from that ſublime principle, to which St. *Peter* directs in the next verſe after the text; *that God may be glorified in all things, through Jeſus Chriſt:* that you may expreſs to him your ſenſe of the duty and gratitude, which you owe him; that you may improve your own hearts, by imitating the goodneſs, which you honour; that you may convince mankind of the excellency of the Chriſtian doctrine. Conſider yourſelves, in this view alſo, as the *ſtewards of God;* as intruſted for the ſervice and promotion of his goſpel. For be aſſured, ſuch important and aſtoniſhing truths as that comprehends, and you have lately heard out of it, were not made known to you, with a deſign, that you ſhould be indifferent about them; but deeply affected by them yourſelves, and ſeriouſly diligent to engage the attention of others to them. If then you have any zeal for the faith, which you profeſs, as heaven knows there never was more need; ſhew men, by its effects, what it is; and give demonſtration to the world, how far the true charity of a good Chriſtian goes beyond the boaſted benevolence of unbelievers, invite men by theſe means to a better opinion of religion; encourage them by the ſame to a ſteadier practice of it. *Be watchful, and ſtrengthen,* by every method you can, *the things which*

* Heb. vi. 10.

which remain, and are ready to die *; but particularly make provision in these excellent ways, which are now proposed to you, for the instruction of the ignorant, the conversion of the vicious, the spiritual improvement, as well as temporal relief of the sick; that so *the administration* of your charity *may not only supply the want of the saints, but be abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God* †.

* Rev. iii. 2. † 2 Cor. ix. 12.

SERMON CXXX.

(Preached before the Houſe of Lords, in the Abbey-Church of *Weſtminſter*, on *Thurſday*, *May* 29. 1739.)

On Speculative Faith, and Ingratitude to God in Practice.

Psalm cvi. 12, 13.

Then believed they his words, they ſang his praiſe: they ſoon forgat his works, they waited not for his counſel.

THE ſame wiſe and good being, who hath fitted the whole frame of this world to the various wants of his creatures, hath fitted the events of things to our reformation and moral improvement. Were they to be conſidered as events only, it would be folly not to learn from them; but as they are leſſons intended by heaven for our inſtruction, it is impiety alſo. The diſpenſations of providence, in which we are leaſt intereſted, may teach us a great deal by analogy, both concerning the conſequences of our behaviour, and the temper of our hearts: for we ſeldom apprehend how fatally we are capable of erring, till we ſee how other perſons have acted before us, and what hath followed. But thoſe tranſactions of former times, which extend their influence down to us, as they naturally excite a greater attention, ſo they generally reward it with more plentiful and more important matter of obſervation; and if we will not be made wiſe by the experience of our predeceſſors, the only doubt is, whether poſſibly our own may not teach us too late.

The

The two great methods of providential inſtruction are mercies and puniſhments. Undoubtedly our Maker would always prefer the firſt, if it were not that enjoying them for ſome time without interruption, tempts us unaccountably to overlook both his goodneſs, and our own duty ariſing from it. Sometimes, indeed, they who forget God in their proſperity, are moved by their afflictions only to murmur againſt him: but for the moſt part ſufferings have a better effect; recall to our minds both our condition and our conduct. And it might be hoped, that the very deep impreſſions which divine judgments make, would naturally be laſting; or however, that when forgiveneſs had ſucceeded chaſtiſement, the united force of terror and gratitude would be perpetual. To recollect our paſt deliverances, and dwell upon the thoughts of our preſent happineſs, appears too pleaſing an employment to grow weariſome. Conſidering both as evidences of God's delight to do us good, muſt ſurely heighten our reliſh of them; and preſerving in memory our obligation to a proper return, beſides its being agreeable to ingenuous minds, one ſhould imagine, would be ſufficiently recommended to us, by our knowing that the continuance of our bleſſings depends on this condition.

But mankind are ſtrangely different in fact from what ſpeculation may repreſent them. Be the advantages of their condition ever ſo great, many will attend only to its inconveniencies; and ſeem as if they had rather be miſerable, than not be ungrateful. Others are too intent on the enjoyment of their felicity, ever to think to whom they owe it; or think too much of the viſible means, to remember the inviſible author. And unhappily, they who have the livelieſt ſenſe of the goodneſs of God, ſeldom retain it long: *they ſing his praiſe, and ſoon forget his works.* Favours received perſonally by ourſelves, wear out of our minds in a very little time: but mercies derived to us from a former age, though continuing to ſubſiſt in full force, though perhaps improved, affect us no otherwiſe than the bleſſing of conſtant health doth; which tempts many to be irregular, for one whom it makes thankful. Then, to complete the unhappineſs, ſome who preſerve the moſt laſting memory of divine favours, remember them often partially, and to bad purpoſes; deduce

from them wrong concluſions, and are led by them into unjuſtifiable behaviour. Though they do not *forget his works, they wait not for his counſel,* but inconſiderately follow their own imaginations; or if inſtruction forces itſelf upon them, *they will not abide it* *; nor bear to be reſtrained, even by the voice of Heaven.

Now, the obvious method of ſecuring events of importance, both from oblivion and miſconſtruction, is, by appointing ſtated and ſolemn commemorations of them. God himſelf hath done this, to preſerve a juſt ſenſe of his works of creation and redemption; but the celebration of his providential goodneſs he hath left, as it was natural, to human care. And ſerious care ought to be taken; as, on the one hand, that inſtitutions of this kind be neither debaſed to low occaſions, nor perverted to ill uſes, ſo on the other, that *they whom the Lord hath redeemed and delivered from the hand of the enemy, may offer unto him the ſacrifice of thankſgiving, and tell out his works with gladneſs; exalt him in the congregation of the people, and praiſe him in the ſeat of the elders* †.

This is the duty which we are now aſſembled to perform; and the two things requiſite to perform it as we ought, are,

I. To conſider the nature of the bleſſing which we commemorate:

II. The behaviour to which it directs us.

I. In ſpeaking of the bleſſings on this day reſtored to us, the preceding evils muſt unavoidably be mentioned; and all perſons ought to bear with the mention of what all contributed to and ſhared in. To whom the chief load of guilt was imputable, the public voice hath moſt juſtly declared; but every order of men was blameable, and every order puniſhed. Firſt, a zeal exceſſively angry, for it muſt be acknowledged, was ſhewn in the church, againſt a very provoking ſect of zealots; and illegal powers were exerciſed, to a dangerous degree, in the ſtate, when the bounds of legal power were leſs clearly fixed. Then fears and reſentments carried good men too far; and gave bad men an opportunity of leading them inſenſibly further ſtill, by very wicked arts; till they were neither ſure of retreating with ſafety, nor yet could go forward

* So the old Tranſlation. † Pſ. cvii. 2, 22, 32.

forward without great guilt. Conceſſions were made them, in ſome caſes, too large; in moſt, if not all, very ſufficient. But theſe came too late. The minds of men were exaſperated, and confidence in each other loſt; ſo that, inſtead of reconciling, they only gave ground of advantage for adding new demands, which the makers of them well knew could not be granted. Inſiſting, however, that they ſhould, from diſcontents they broke out into tumults, and tumults ſoon heightened into open rebellion. To have lived in *theſe beginnings of ſorrows* * muſt have been very dreadful; but how much more, when diſcord had brought forth its perfect work; had involved the three nations in bloodſhed, and the numberleſs diſtreſſes that belong to civil wars. After infinite ſacrilege and devaſtation, committed under colour of religion and freedom, war indeed ceaſed for a time; but the fruits of war continued. The primitive form of our eccleſiaſtical government was illegally aboliſhed; the univerſities, the clergy, the body of the people moſt cruelly oppreſſed; till one part of the conquerors, attempting to extend their oppreſſion over the reſt, they took a deſperate reſolution, with which they perſuaded each other Heaven had inſpired them, to eſtabliſh themſelves by overturning the whole. Then the majeſty of the crown, the honours of the nobility, the privileges of the commons, fell a promiſcuous ſacrifice, as the church had done before, to enthuſiaſtic fury. Freſh commotions, and a new effuſion of blood, attended this cataſtrophe. The ſubverters of lawful authority by force, underwent repeated ſubverſions of their own one by another; the patrons of unbounded liberty ſunk under the dominion of abſolute tyranny; the aſſerters of an imaginary purity in religion, promoted its being defiled with pernicious corruptions; and, by a moſt inſtructive ſeverity of Providence, all in their turns were made to *eat of the fruit of their own way, and were filled with their own devices* †, to ſo ſurpriſing a degree of exactneſs, that there was not perhaps any one ill thing which either ſide did, but the juſtice of God returned it viſibly upon them.

Such was the ſtate of our anceſtors for many years; groaning under their preſent evils, and their *hearts failing them for fear,*

* Mark xiii. 8. † Prov. i. 31.

fear, and for looking after thoſe things which were coming on the earth *. But moſt unexpectedly, when all attempts for reſtoring our government and laws had proved ineffectual; when the few remaining defenders of them had neither ſtrength of their own, nor hope of aſſiſtance from abroad; when their oppoſers had all the power of the nation in their hands; and, however divided amongſt themſelves, were engaged by principle and intereſt, by fear and hatred, to ſupport their common cauſe, then did God *bow the heart of his people, even as the heart of one man* †, to recal their exiled ſovereign, and re-eſtabliſh their ancient conſtitution in church and ſtate. *The merciful and gracious Lord hath ſo done his marvellous works, that they ought to be had in remembrance* ‡. *Praiſed be the Lord daily; even the God who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us* §.

But great as this deliverance was, yet every fibre of ſuch *a root of bitterneſs* ‖ could not be extirpated immediately: and a new evil *ſprung up* from it, which once more threatened us with ruin. Our princes, deprived in their tender years of the inſtruction and example of their royal father, baniſhed into the midſt of temptation, and ſeeing and feeling the terrible effects of a pretended or miſguided zeal for our liberties and religion, returned to us with diſpoſitions unfavourable to both. Theſe, in the reign of the younger of them, had reduced us to the very extremity of danger; when the mercy of Providence again interpoſing, delivered us; and not only completed, but we hope hath ſecured to us for ever, the whole bleſſing of the reſtoration, under our preſent happy eſtabliſhment. Our ſovereign, we are ſure, hath the ſincereſt regard both to our civil and religious rights; his poſterity have deeply imbibed the ſame generous principle; and all that we can have to fear muſt be from ourſelves.

II. Let us, therefore, proceed to conſider, what behaviour the great event which we commemorate preſcribes; what is the *counſel* which God hath given us by it.

The greateſt part of the inſtruction indeed muſt ariſe from our ſufferings; but the whole power of making advantage of it,

* Luke xxi. 26. † 2 Sam. xix. 14. ‡ Pſal. cxi. 4.
§ Ib. lxviii. 19. ‖ Heb. xii. 15.

it ariſes from our deliverance. And our ſufferings being cauſed by mutual vehemence, and our deliverance being effected in peace; both may well diſpoſe us to a mild conſideration of what they teach. To make invectives now, againſt perſons who are gone long ago to anſwer for their ſins before God, can be of little benefit; and to charge others raſhly with inheriting their faults, may be great injuſtice; beſides that generoſity ſhould reſtrain one ſide from bitterneſs; and decency, the other. Undoubtedly caution, to prevent the repetition of paſt evils, is highly requiſite. But where ſo large a proportion of them was brought about by ſuch as meant it not, the moſt needful caution is, that we each of us avoid falling into the ſame error; that we recollect, whatever our ſtation or profeſſion be, not only the injuries, which our predeceſſors in the ſame underwent, but chiefly thoſe which they did; and apply our knowledge of former times, not to exaſperate others, but to amend or warn ourſelves. This is the uſe, which ought to be made of the plaineſt parts of the hiſtory; and much more ſhould we take care, not to grow warm about the doubtful ones; but allowing men to differ from us, as they may very innocently, concerning the characters and conduct of perſons and parties formerly, endeavour all to agree in the one material point, our own conduct now. And ſurely the period of time before our view, ſuggeſts very plainly moſt important directions to every ſort of perſons amongſt us.

It muſt remind the governors of the eſtabliſhed church, that rigorous treatment of ſuch as diſſent from it, and endeavours to extend their own authority, or influence, beyond reaſonable bounds, are methods as contrary to prudence, as they are to religion; that neither learning, nor piety, nor eminence in other virtues, will be able to ſupport them, without a ſuitable degree of humility and forbearance; but that care to be inoffenſive, and diligence to be uſeful, are their true ſtrength. And at the ſame time, they, who are prejudiced againſt the eſtabliſhed church, ought to remember, that its ruin was attended with that of the whole conſtitution: that there followed in its place, firſt another church-power, allowed to be much more terrible, then all manner of confuſion; and this continued, till providence re-eſtabliſhed us on

the old foundation. So that even in thoſe times their ſchemes were far from producing any good; and it cannot be fitting to revive them now, when, God be thanked, there never was ſo little of the bad ſpirit, which they pretend to fear. We only deſire protection and ſupport in ſerving the cauſe of religion and virtue; and it is a very unkind and diſcouraging return made us, for avoiding the faults imputed to our predeceſſors; if ſome will not ſee it, and others will give us no proof of their ſeeing it.

From the occurrences of the ſame times, counſellors of princes ought to learn, that the great intereſt of the ſovereign and their own is, never to bear hard upon the liberties of the people; for they will reſtore themſelves with dangerous force: never to give them jealouſy; for too often ſcarce any thing will remove it: never to deſpiſe even their leſs reaſonable complaints; but, as far as it is poſſible, always promote the public good by methods agreeable to the public inclination. And the ſeveral parts of the legiſlature ſhould learn, each to maintain their own privileges with calm reſolution; but to abſtain religiouſly from mutual encroachments: for not only the ſacred obligation of juſtice requires it, but experience hath ſhewn, that when once the inward balance of a conſtitution is broken, endleſs diſorders are likely to follow; and no part of the whole is in more danger of ſuffering more, than that which at firſt appeared to be the gainer.

But beſides the ſeparate admonitions, given by the hiſtory of this day to particular ſorts of perſons; the inſtruction, which it offers to us all in common, deſerves our ſerious attention.

Much of the miſery, undergone by theſe nations, was owing to that unhappy proneneſs, which there is in mankind, not only to magnify the real inconveniencies of their condition, but to add imaginary ones to them. And their own ill conduct is always the laſt thing on which they charge them; that of their ſuperiors uſually the firſt. For theſe inconveniencies, they flatter themſelves in the next place, there muſt be ſome remedy; and then, whatever ſcheme for reformation either their own imagination preſents, or any body elſe ſuggeſts, they embrace it immediately, run haſtily away with it, and ſoon grow too vehement, ever to conſider, whether it be

not impracticable or ineffectual, unjuſt or pernicious. Indeed to be abſolutely againſt all changes, is either great folly, or great wickedneſs. Things may have been wrong conſtituted originally; they may have degenerated ſince; they may be attended now with different circumſtances; and alterations may both be reaſonable to cure preſent complaints, and neceſſary to prevent worſe diſorders. But ſtill, the general preſumption ſhould always be in favour of what is eſtabliſhed; and no innovations, greater than need, ought ever to be attempted. Intereſt, opinion, reſentment, warmth of temper, place different things before different perſons, in very ſtrong lights: too ſtrong perhaps to ſee them diſtinctly; at leaſt, to obſerve every thing connected with them. On theſe views however they boldly act: heat one another, ſometimes by concurrence, ſometimes by oppoſition: doubt nothing in themſelves, ſuſpect nothing in thoſe who join with them, pardon nothing in thoſe who differ from them; deſtroy the quiet of numbers who have not deſerved it, as well as their own; and all to do miſchief, it may be, inſtead of good, even though they intend good. For not only projects, that look plauſible to ſuch perſons, may be very hurtful notwithſtanding; perhaps to themſelves, perhaps to others, who have an equal right to be conſidered; but ſuppoſing them innocent, ſuppoſing them beneficial; yet attempting them raſhly, may do unknown harm, ſhould they miſcarry; and coſt infinitely too dear, ſhould they ſucceed. If a nation is to be put into a ferment for them; and the multitude called in, to be vehement about matters of which they are no judges: this in itſelf is a dreadful evil, and may poſſibly riſe to a deſtructive height. For in ſome circumſtances it is much eaſier to inflame perſons, than to foreſee when they will cool; and there is one point of yet greater importance than reforming faults, preſerving reverence to authority. If this be once loſt, poſſibly a blameleſs conduct of affairs, which yet no body can ever promiſe, may not reſtore it; and unleſs it be reſtored, every thing will be levelled. Sooner or later indeed, God knows how long it may be firſt, ſome ſort of order muſt return; but, without the peculiar interpoſition of a kind Providence, the beautiful order of a free government will not. And it ought to be well conſidered, that perſons, who begin with moderate and

moſt laudable intentions, may forget themſelves, may be entangled with others, may be led or driven into doing what they greatly diſapprove; or may loſe all power of ſtopping miſchief, when it is once ſet to work; and have nothing left, but to periſh with the ſhip in the ſtorm, which they had helped to raiſe. Theſe dangers indeed cannot be reaſons for complying with every thing; for in vain will heaven have reſtored to us our happy form of government, if we ſuffer it to be a form only. But they are powerful reaſons for thinking coolly what deſerves oppoſition, and oppoſing it with temper: for conſidering who are the perſons really to blame, in what degree upon the whole they are ſo, and how difficult it is not to be ſo; for redreſſing grievances by no other than regular methods, and waiting for opportunities, not forcing them; for examining faithfully the purity of our own intentions; for aſking ourſelves often, how far we mean to go; and obſerving carefully, what thoſe perſons aim at, with whom we are engaged; for weighing well what remedies the public conſtitution will bear, under what it will be likely to ſink; and ſeriouſly recollecting, how great multitudes have their fate involved in that of the whole. There can be no cautions more evidently juſt than theſe, though we had not had experience to teach us ſo awfully, that for want of regarding them in the times now before us, no one ſcheme ended as it was deſigned at firſt. Every thing was propoſed to be reformed into perfection; every thing, inſtead of that, was completely brought to ruin; and happy did men think themſelves, with very good cauſe, when at laſt they were able to get back into the ſituation, which they had imagined before to be ſo intolerable. *Now all theſe things happened unto them for enſamples; and they are written for our admonition* *.

Nor let it be replied, that though the bold attempts for reformation and liberty miſcarried then, they may ſucceed another time. Let us rather reflect, that though the confuſion and ſlavery, which they introduced, proved but temporary then, the next trial may perpetuate them. Liberty is a bleſſing of ſuch unſpeakable value, that no wonder if the very name of it be dear to men; but the name miſapplied was fatal

* 1 Cor. x. 11.

fatal to our forefathers, and may be ſo to us. Licentiouſneſs of ſpeech and writing, a favourite and moſt entertaining ſpecies of liberty to the inconſiderate, had the effects amongſt them, which it muſt have every where; not only of injuring particular perſons in the moſt ſenſible manner, but of deſtroying that regard to ſtations and offices, ranks and orders of men, which muſt be preſerved, or ſociety muſt be diſſolved. For when once contending parties, by their mutual accuſations and aſperſions, have taught the people to think ill, or meanly, of all perſons that are, or can be their governors, what remains for them, but to think in the ſame manner of government itſelf, and treat it accordingly? Conſidering, indeed, how artfully men have learnt to diſguiſe theſe enormities, there may perhaps be no effectual method of reſtraining them by law, without very great danger of hurtful conſequences from the reſtraint. But to take this advantage for being guilty of them, is a moſt ungenerous uſe of freedom againſt ſuch as wiſh it well, and a moſt unwiſe one againſt ſuch as do not. All good men, therefore, ſhould labour unanimouſly to keep down this bad ſpirit, each on his own ſide; for in vain do we exclaim againſt what we indulge; and to diſcountenance it ſo ſtrongly, by expreſſing their private abhorrence of it, that there may be no reaſon, and no pretence, if poſſible, for a public proviſion againſt it. Liberty cannot be ſupported any more than power, but by exerciſing it with moderation. And they that overturn either, by carrying it to extravagant heights, after ſuch warning as Providence hath given us, muſt neither expect any remedy, nor much pity.

But indeed there are perſons who ſeem almoſt to think that liberty cannot be extended too far; that every diminution of authority is ſo much gain, every increaſe of it ſo much loſs, to the community. Now, if this be true, laws and government are a public nuiſance; and if not, men ought to conſider what reſtraints are requiſite, as well as what may be abuſed; and remember, that a right to do things neceſſary to be done, muſt be veſted ſomewhere, and muſt be exerted. Authority indeed is of a growing nature; but ſo is averſion to authority: and freedom unreſtrained is power unreſtrained. No tyrannies have been more inſupportable than thoſe of the multitude;

multitude; nor can any perſons be more juſtly dreaded, than they who declaim for liberty, in the ſpirit of perſecution, and demand it with inſolence, in the midſt of the enjoyment of it. Such behaviour plainly ſhews, that, not content with being free, they want to rule; and ſince they cannot plead that any harſh treatment hath provoked them to theſe outrages, they are ſo far leſs excuſable than ſome of their predeceſſors in the times of our troubles.

But however ſtrongly we are cautioned againſt licentiouſneſs, by the ſufferings of former days, there hath ariſen, notwithſtanding, in our own, one very ſhocking kind of it, almoſt peculiar to this nation, that of publicly treating religion with contempt; and after magnifying morals merely in oppoſition to it, explaining them away to juſt nothing. Setting the world at large in theſe reſpects, appears to be a principal point which ſome have at heart; whoſe character in ſcripture might ſurely have given a more general ſuſpicion of them than it hath; that *while they promiſe others liberty, they are themſelves the ſervants of corruption* *. And too many, who have no deſign of contributing to the progreſs of irreligion, ſee it, however, with great tranquillity. Let men think, let men act juſt as they will, provided they are not bigots, but perſons of free principles, the public is ſafe, and all is well. But is it ſafe that they ſhould be bigots to atheiſm, bigots to profligateneſs? Or can it be a matter of indifference, whether they have a good and right rule of conduct, though it were with ſome miſtakes; or whether they have none at all, or quite a wrong one? We own, that falſe notions about religion were one great cauſe of the ſufferings of this nation; but ſo were falſe notions about freedom another. And why are miſtakes, or even wilful abuſes, a reaſon for trampling upon the former, when they are not thought a reaſon againſt exalting the latter without bounds? We own, that ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm ought to be guarded againſt; and that this is a moſt important leſſon of providence to us on this day. But it cannot be right to guard againſt them, by rooting out of mens minds the reverence due to the Author of Nature; or by taking methods, which, in the natural courſe of

* 2 Pet. ii. 19.

of things, will bring one or both of them back upon us, as perhaps we have begun to experience; or at leaſt will bring evils not leſs formidable. Public happineſs cannot ſubſiſt without ſocial virtue and moral ſelf-government; nor can either of theſe ſubſiſt without regard to God. Nothing but the thought of his ſeeing and rewarding, can poſſibly have force ſufficient, in all caſes, to reſtrain men's paſſions, to counterbalance their preſent intereſts, to excite the indolent, keep the enterpriſing within due bounds, and unite all in making the common good their common end.

We ſhall, therefore, neglect the moſt important *counſels* of Providence on this day, if we learn not from ſo inſtructive a diſpenſation of it, that juſt ſenſe of our duty to the Governor and Lawgiver of the world; which, if our forefathers had preſerved, theſe miſeries had never happened; and, if we preſerve, they will never happen more. For as, on the one hand, religion enforces powerfully that neceſſary caution expreſſed by the prophet *Ezra: Seeing thou our God haſt promiſed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch deliverance as this, ſhould we again break thy commandments, wouldſt thou not be angry with us, till thou haſt conſumed us* *; ſo on the other, it ſupports us with that noble confidence expreſſed by the prophet *Samuel: Fear not; but ſerve the Lord with all your heart: for the Lord will not forſake his people, for his great name's ſake. Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him in truth: for conſider how great things he hath done for you* †.

* Ezra ix. 13, 14. † 1 Sam. xii. 20, 22, 24.

SER-

SERMON CXXXI.

(Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Goſpel in Foreign Parts, in the Pariſh Church of St. *Mary-le-Bow*, on *Friday*, *February* 20. 1740-1.

On Christian Benevolence and Compassion to the Savage and Barbarous Nations.

Mark vi. 34.

And Jeſus, when he came out, ſaw much people; and was moved with compaſſion towards them, becauſe they were as ſheep not having a ſhepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

THIS paſſage of the evangeliſt expreſſes, in ſo ſtrong and engaging a manner, the benevolent temper of our bleſſed Lord, and his tender regard to the ſpiritual wants of men, that, if we ſuffer our minds to dwell upon it a while, it cannot fail of exciting the ſame diſpoſition in us; eſpecially if we conſider, that the view which he is here deſcribed to have had of their deſtitute condition, not only induced him *to teach them* himſelf *many things* concerning *the kingdom of God**, but cauſed that moſt ſerious reflection and exhortation, *The harveſt truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harveſt, that he will ſend forth labourers into his harveſt* †; immediately after which, he ſent forth *his twelve diſciples* to preach the goſpel ‡; as he did the *ſeventy* at another time, on the very ſame motive, mentioned by another evangeliſt in the very ſame words §: thus opening

* Luke ix. 11.
† Matth. ix. 36—38.
‡ Matth. x. 1.
§ Luke x. 1, 2.

ing the way, by his previous care of *the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael**, for uniting us all into *one fold under one ſhepherd*†.

To carry on the great work which he began, of directing mankind to preſent and future happineſs, is the end of this ſociety: incorporated by a prince, to whom religion and liberty will have eternal obligations; and eſtabliſhed, firſt for the ſupport of Chriſtianity in our colonies and factories abroad, then for the propagation of it amongſt the Heathens intermixed with them, and bordering upon them; but taking its name from the remoter and more extenſive part of the deſign.

Every poſſible reaſon required our predeceſſors, in this excellent undertaking, to begin with inſpecting the ſtate of the *Engliſh* plantations in *America*. And nothing could be more applicable to them on that occaſion than the words of the text: *They ſaw much people, and were moved with compaſſion towards them; becauſe they were as ſheep not having a ſhepherd.* The *European* inhabitants there being private adventurers, neither numerous, nor rich, nor certain of ſucceſs, nor unanimous in belief, eſtabliſhed in ſeveral provinces no form whatever of public worſhip and inſtruction. Too many of them carried but little ſenſe of Chriſtianity abroad with them; a great part of the reſt ſuffered it to wear out gradually; and their children grew of courſe to have yet leſs than they; till in ſome countries there were ſcarce any footſteps of it left beyond the mere name. No teacher was known, no religious aſſembly held; the Lord's day diſtinguiſhed only by more general diſſoluteneſs; the ſacrament of baptiſm not adminiſtered for near twenty years together, nor that of the Lord's ſupper for near ſixty, amongſt many thouſands of people, who did not deny the obligation of theſe duties, but lived notwithſtanding in a ſtupid neglect of them. Such was the ſtate of things in more of our colonies than one; and where it was a little better, it was, however, lamentably bad. Some perſons appear very deſirous of ſeeing what ſort of creatures men would be without the knowledge of God. Here a ſufficient trial was made of this: and it ſhewed to an unhappy degree of certainty, that they would be wicked and

* Matth. x. 6. † John x. 16.

profligate, and brutal in every reſpect, and return in a few generations to entire barbariſm. Poſſibly, indeed, they might have been delivered from this evil by that of Popery; which, always taking advantage of ignorance and profaneneſs, had already begun to ſpread; and dreadful was the alternative of one or the other. In theſe circumſtances, the poor inhabitants made, from all parts, the moſt affecting repreſentations of their deplorable condition; the truth of which was but too fully confirmed by their reſpective governors, and the perſons of principal note in each province. There could not be worthier objects of regard than ſuch complainants. And if they, who remained inſenſible, did not deſerve pity ſo much, they wanted it ſtill more. The ſociety, therefore, in proportion to their own ability, and the need of each place, firſt ſent over miſſionaries, to perform the offices of religion amongſt them, then ſchoolmaſters, to inſtruct their children in the principles of it; who, after *enduring much contradiction of ſinners* *, and going through a great variety of labours and difficulties, have, through the bleſſing of God, made a remarkable change in the face of things; and laid a noble ground-work, of what, we hope, will every day be carried on towards perfection. But at preſent much remains to be done. Multitudes continue, as before, in a thoughtleſs diſregard to almoſt every part of Chriſtianity, and multitudes alſo are daily petitioning for help; which to ſome we cannot give at all, and to others ſo little, that they have divine ſervice only once in many weeks; and ſeveral diſtricts of ſixty, ſeventy and eighty miles long, have but one miniſter to officiate in each of them.

The next object of the ſociety's concern were the poor negroes. Theſe unhappy wretches learn, in their native country, the groſſeſt idolatry, and the moſt ſavage diſpoſitions; and then are ſold to the beſt purchaſer; ſometimes by their enemies, who would elſe put them to death; ſometimes by their neareſt friends, who are either unable or unwilling to maintain them. Their condition in our colonies, though it cannot well be worſe than it would have been at home, is yet nearly as hard as poſſible: their ſervitude moſt laborious, their puniſhments moſt ſevere. And thus many thouſands of them

* Heb. xii. 3.

them ſpend their whole days, one generation after another, undergoing, with reluctant minds, continual toil in this world, and comforted with no hopes of reward in a better. For it is not to be expected, that maſters, too commonly negligent of Chriſtianity themſelves, will take much pains to teach it their ſlaves; whom even the better part of them are in a great meaſure habituated to conſider, as they do their cattle, merely with a view to the profit ariſing from them. Not a few, therefore, have openly oppoſed their inſtruction, from an imagination, now indeed proved and acknowledged to be groundleſs, that baptiſm would entitle them to freedom. Others, by obliging them to work on *Sundays* to provide themſelves neceſſaries, leave them neither time to learn religion, nor any proſpect of being able to ſubſiſt, if once the duty of reſting on that day makes part of their belief. And ſome, it may be feared, have been averſe to their becoming Chriſtians, becauſe, after that, no pretence will remain for not treating them like men. When theſe obſtacles are added to the fondneſs they have for their old Heatheniſh rites, and the ſtrong prejudices they muſt have againſt teachers from among thoſe whom they ſerve ſo unwillingly, it cannot be wondered, if the progreſs made in their converſion prove but ſlow. After ſome experience of this, catechiſts were appointed in two places, by way of trial, for their inſtruction alone; whoſe ſucceſs, where it was leaſt, hath not been inconſiderable; and ſo great in the plantations belonging to the ſociety, that out of two hundred and thirty, at leaſt ſeventy are now believers in Chriſt. And there is lately an improvement to this ſcheme begun to be executed, by qualifying and employing young negroes, prudently choſen, to teach their countrymen; from which, in the opinion of the beſt judges, we may reaſonably promiſe ourſelves, that this miſerable *people*, the generality of whom have hitherto *ſat in darkneſs, will ſee great light* *.

There ſtill remains another branch of the ſociety's care, the *Indians* bordering on our ſettlements. Theſe conſiſt of various nations, valuable for ſome of their qualities, but immerſed in the vileſt ſuperſtitions, and engaged in almoſt per-

* Matth. iv. 16.

petual wars againſt each other, which they proſecute with barbarities unheard of amongſt the reſt of mankind; implacable in their reſentments, when once provoked; boundleſs in their intemperance, when they have opportunities for it; and at ſuch times miſchievous in the higheſt degree; impatient of labour, to procure themſelves the common conveniencies of life; inhumanly negligent of perſons in years; and, if accounts of ſuch things may be credited, not ſcrupling to kill and eat their neareſt relations, when the long expeditions, which they make, for hunting, or againſt enemies, have reduced them to ſtraits. Now, theſe poor creatures alſo, diligent endeavours have been uſed to enlighten and reclaim, on ſuch occaſions, and by ſuch methods, as were leaſt ſuſpicious. For, without due precautions, harm would be done, inſtead of good, where natural jealouſy is ſo induſtriouſly fomented by an artful neighbour. And, after all precautions, it cannot be an eaſy work to convert nations, whoſe manners are ſo uncultivated; whoſe languages are ſo different, ſo hard to learn, and ſo little adapted to the doctrines of religion; with whom we ſcarce ever contract affinities; and who ſeldom continue long enough in the ſame place, to let any good impreſſions fix into habits. Yet, notwithſtanding theſe difficulties, which fruſtrated formerly a very expenſive attempt, another hath been made of late; and, through the bleſſing of God, hath ſo reformed and improved the morals, together with the notions, of one *Indian* tribe *, that we cannot but hope the reſt will be induced, by ſeeing their happineſs, to follow their example.

You have now heard in brief the ſtate of our colonies with reſpect to religion. And were the proſpect of further ſucceſs much ſmaller than it is, yet our rule would be, to do our duty, and leave the event to Heaven. Perſons of unwilling or deſponding minds, may eaſily find arguments to prove every good deſign unpromiſing, or even impracticable. But the natural dictate of piety and virtue is to try. And the expreſs command of our bleſſed Lord is, that *the goſpel be preached*

* The *Mohawks*, who compoſe two Chriſtian congregations, each conſiſting of above 200 perſons. Their ſchoolmaſter is a *Mohawk*. There are alſo ſome converts amongſt the *Oneidan* and *Tuſcarora Indians*.

preached to every creature *. Nor is only the offer of inſtruction to Heathens, but the continuance of it for ever amongſt Chriſtians, the will of him, who, as *he gave ſome, apoſtles and evangeliſts*, gave *ſome* alſo *paſtors and teachers, for the perfecting of the ſaints, and the edifying of his body* †. By endeavouring to our power, that theſe things be done, we ſhall pay obedience to his authority, and imitate his example: we ſhall give a proof to our own hearts, that we are indeed his diſciples, and convince the world, that zeal for religion is not yet extinguiſhed; we ſhall habituate ourſelves to the moſt amiable of virtues, good-will to mankind in the moſt important of their intereſts; we ſhall ſerve the purpoſes of providence, which have their accompliſhment, *whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear* ‡; and how much ſoever we may *labour in vain* with reſpect to others, *yet our judgment will be with the Lord, and our work with our God* §.

But the ſame God hath promiſed, that his truth ſhall finally prevail upon earth. And though we cannot ſay, at what time, or by what degrees, this promiſe ſhall be fulfilled; yet we have room to hope, that every ſincere endeavour is all along contributing ſomething towards its completion. The good ſeed, which appears to lie dead for a while, will ſpring up in its ſeaſon: that, which ſeems to ſhoot weakly at firſt, will gain ſtrength inſenſibly, through the favourable influences of heaven; and *the grain of muſtard-ſeed become a tree* ||. Thus have theſe colonies themſelves grown: thus hath Chriſtianity grown from its beginning, both in other places, and in them alſo: nor have we any reaſon to doubt its going on to do ſo ſtill. In leſs than forty years, under many diſcouragements, and with an income very diſproportionate to the vaſtneſs of the undertaking, a great deal hath been done; though little notice may have been taken of it, by perſons inattentive to theſe things, or backward to acknowledge them. Near a hundred churches have been built: above ten thouſand bibles and common prayers, above a hundred thouſand other pious tracts diſtributed: great multitudes,

* Mark xvi. 15. † Eph. iv. 11, 12. ‡ Ezek. ii. 5.
§ Iſa. xlix. 5. || Matth. xiii. 31, 32.

tudes, upon the whole, of negroes and *Indians* brought over to the Chriſtian faith; many numerous congregations have been ſet up, which now ſupport the worſhip of God at their own expence, where it was not known before; and ſeventy perſons are conſtantly employed, at the expence of the ſociety, in the farther ſervice of the goſpel*. All this, we grant, makes but a ſmall appearance, in a tract of land, extending ſixteen hundred miles. But it is an encouraging ſpecimen, however, of what longer time and more liberal aſſiſtance may effect.

Both the hopes, and the means, of ſupporting Chriſtianity amongſt our own people there, are juſt the ſame as here at home. And though the Negroes and *Indians* are prejudiced againſt it; and but poorly qualified, in compariſon, to judge of the evidence of it; yet they and all men *have the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſciences alſo bearing witneſs* †. They may be convicted but too eaſily of tranſgreſſing evident duties of nature; and when once they ſee their need of repentance and pardon, they will gladly receive the goſpel of Chriſt, of which theſe two are the diſtinguiſhing articles. It will appear in itſelf infinitely preferable to what they have believed hitherto. The teachers of it will appear, both from their ſuperior knowledge, and good lives, worthy of credit. The profeſſors of it around them will bear a teſtimony to it, in ſome reſpects the ſtronger, for their being often condemned by it. And if ſuch arguments do not amount, after all, to the higheſt evidence; they afford, however, very rational motives of aſſent, eſpecially to perſons capable of no further information; and were theſe motives weaker than they are, yet, the grace of God producing by them ſo powerful an effect on the minds of men, we undoubtedly approve ourſelves, by propoſing them, his miniſters for the happineſs of our fellow-creatures; and may juſtly be *confident, that he who hath begun a good work in them, will perform it* ‡ perfectly.

But

* Since the preaching of this ſermon, all theſe numbers have been much increaſed. The miſſionaries, catechiſts and ſchoolmaſters are now, 1765, above 100.

† Rom. ii. 15. ‡ Phil. i. 6.

But perhaps not our ſucceſs, but the uſe and benefit of it, will be called in queſtion. Now of this we apprehend, there is abundant proof. The bare profeſſion and outward appearance of ſuch a religion, as the Chriſtian is, if taught in any tolerable purity, muſt have ſome right influence; and the body of a people cannot go the utmoſt lengths in wickedneſs, whilſt that appearance ſubſiſts. What lengths they would go in time, if it were loſt, as we have not experienced, we are not apt to conſider. But a little reflexion on the number and ſtrength of human paſſions, and the abilities, which we have, of finding means to gratify them, would give us a high value of whatever hath any peculiar force to reſtrain them. The one inſtitution of a day of holy reſt, is not only, under prudent regulations, a great refreſhment to the bulk of mankind; but greatly tends to civilize them alſo, by uniting neighbourhoods in formed aſſemblies, to acknowledge their common dependence on God, and relation to each other, with hearts diſengaged from ſelfiſh attentions, and open to friendly regards. Nor is it poſſible, be they ever ſo negligent hearers of public worſhip and inſtruction, but conſiderable impreſſions, at leaſt general ones, muſt remain upon their minds. And moſt evidently the impreſſions of religion diſpoſe men to every thing productive of common good: to juſtice and veracity, and the reverence of an oath; without which the intercourſe of man with man is not a moment ſafe: to faithfulneſs, duty, and love in the ſeveral relations of life, public and private: to mildneſs, charity, and compaſſion in their whole behaviour: to ſobriety and induſtry, the pillars of national wealth and greatneſs; and to that joyful hope of a better world, which is our trueſt direction, and firmeſt ſupport, in every ſtage of our journey through this. Many more perſons will be thus influenced in various degrees, than are uſually obſerved: for a regular inoffenſive behaviour affords little matter of ſpeculation and diſcourſe. And though ſtill the generality may be bad; yet, if left to themſelves, they would certainly have been worſe. Every body owns, that a wrong belief hath a great power to deprave mens morals. Surely then a right one muſt have ſome power to reform them. And if not ſo much as might be wiſhed, this is no more an argument againſt the uſefulneſs of religion, than of

reaſon; but a ſtrong argument, why both ſhould be cultivated to the utmoſt; and carefully applied to ſo important a purpoſe. If our colonies had not experienced great evils from the decay of Chriſtianity amongſt them; they would never have petitioned us ſo earneſtly for inſtruction in it, as they have done. And if they had not experienced great good from the reſtoration of it, that earneſtneſs would never have continued, as it doth, to this day.

Nor will our compliance with their requeſt be a benefit only to them, but to this nation alſo. If they are diſhoneſt and profligate, every ſingle perſon here, who hath concerns with them, will be in danger of ſuffering by it. If they conſume their wealth and their time in vices and follies, their trade will be gained over, from them and us, by our rivals and adverſaries. And if the ties of a religion, binding men ſo ſtrongly to *be ſubject for conſcience ſake* *, are looſened from off their minds, which may ſome time or another need every tie, that can keep them attached to us; it will much facilitate their becoming adverſaries themſelves. And we ſhall well deſerve their revolting from us, if we take no care of their obeying God. But, on the contrary, as Chriſtian principles will teach them dutifulneſs and loyalty; ſo receiving from hence the ſupport of thoſe principles, will recommend us to their gratitude; hoping for the continuance of that ſupport, will create ſome dependence in point of intereſt; and agreeing in the ſame faith and worſhip with us, will be an everlaſting motive to civil unity alſo.

But another common benefit of propagating Chriſtianity in our colonies is, that thus we ſhall hinder corruptions of Chriſtianity from prevailing there, and ſharing with profaneneſs a divided empire over the land. If no authorized teachers are ſent, ſome inducement or another will raiſe voluntary ones from time to time; and very poſſibly the leſs reaſonable their doctrine is, the more gladly it may be received. For if ſentiments of religion are not duly cultivated, as they quite wear out of ſome minds, ſo in others they degenerate into ſuperſtition or enthuſiaſm. And accordingly many pernicious errors, beſides the abovementioned capital one of Popery, took early

* Rom. xiii. 5.

early root in theſe provinces; nor are they yet extirpated, perhaps in part newly revived; ſome diſſolving the obligations of moral duties; ſome deſtroying the inward peace of very pious and good perſons, and making life gloomy and uncomfortable; ſome leading men to aſcribe every folly or wickedneſs, that poſſeſſes the fancy, to divine inſpiration; ſome inconſiſtent with our preſent happy eſtabliſhment; and others, deſtructive of the ſafety of all governments whatever, by forbidding to contribute any kind of aſſiſtance to the public defence againſt enemies; on which notion the repreſentatives of the province of *Pennſylvania* have acted this laſt ſummer*. Now let it only be conſidered, how fatal a more general belief of ſome of theſe doctrines muſt have been there at preſent; indeed how very unhappy the belief of any of them muſt be at all times; and

* See a printed collection of meſſages, anſwers, addreſſes, &c. the ſubſtance of which is as follows. The Quakers, *having applied themſelves with great induſtry to obtain an uncommon majority in the aſſembly*, though *they are not above one third of the people in number*, refuſed to make any *proviſion of neceſſaries for the troops to be raiſed in that province*, as being a thing *repugnant to their religious principles*, though his majeſty had notified *under his ſign manual*, that he expected it from them. Soon after this they adjourned for above five weeks, *though the governor made ſtrong inſtances to the contrary*, ſetting forth, *That as the new levies were in want of every thing, even houſes to cover their heads, he was hourly apprehenſive of their committing ſome diſorders.* And being called together again by him in about a fortnight, inſtead of raiſing any money, they made a complaint, that many of their ſervants had been inliſted, and demanded the reſtitution of them. The governor anſwered, that they might eaſily have prevented this inconvenience, and might ſtill eaſily remedy it, by methods which he pointed out to them; that he had done what he could to relieve them, and would continue to do ſo; but that forcing out of his majeſty's troops at once all the ſervants in them, would be unreaſonable and unjuſt, very detrimental to the ſervice, and very dangerous to the public peace. Yet notwithſtanding theſe repreſentations, and though Mr. *Penn*, one of their proprietors, many merchants and other inhabitants of *Philadelphia*, and the council of the province, concurred with the governor, and preſſed them earneſtly to anſwer his majeſty's expectations, they came at length to this reſolution only: *That 3000 l. of their current money be paid for the king's uſe; provided that all the ſervants inliſted in the province*, whom they had computed at 300, and valued at 10 l. each, *be firſt returned to their reſpective maſters, free of all charges; and ſuch aſſurances given as* three perſons, named in the reſolution, *ſhould think fitting that the ſaid ſervants are returned, and that no ſervants be inliſted for the future.* Theſe being the conditions on which the money was given, it will not be thought ſtrange, that when the laſt advices came from thence, no part of it had been paid.

the importance of ſupporting inſtructors in true religion, were it only for a ſtanding guard againſt the worldly inconveniences of falſe religion, will evidently appear to be very great.

But let us now think, what good muſt follow from extending this inſtruction to the poor Negroes alſo. The ſervitude and hard labour which they undergo, be it as juſtifiable as it can, ſurely requires, that we ſhould make them all the amends in our power; and the danger, into which they have brought our colonies more than once, demands the greateſt care to compoſe and ſoften their vindictive and ſullen ſpirits. Now there can be nothing contrived on purpoſe, more likely to effect this, than belief of the goſpel; which not only forbids in general, both doing and *recompenſing evil**; but commands in particular *as many as are ſervants under the yoke, to count their maſters worthy of all honour* †, *and be ſubject to them with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but alſo to the froward; for this is thank worthy, if a man for conſcience towards God endure grief, ſuffering wrongfully* ‡: *to do ſervice with good will, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing, that whatever good any man doth, the ſame he ſhall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free* §. The tendency of ſuch doctrine muſt be, to make their tempers milder, and their lives happier. And no imagination can be ſuggeſted to them, of any worldly exemptions or privileges ariſing from their profeſſion of it. For as human authority hath granted them none; ſo the ſcripture, far from making any alteration in civil rights, expreſly directs, that *every man abide in the condition wherein he is called*, with great indifference of mind concerning outward circumſtances ‖; and the only rule, which it preſcribes for ſervants of the ſame religion with their maſters, is, *not to deſpiſe them becauſe they are brethren, but do them ſervice the rather* ¶. Nor hath experience at all ſhewn the behaviour of ſuch, in the preſent caſe, to be different from what reaſon would lead us to expect. On the contrary, in a great rebellion of the Negroes at *New York*, only two of thoſe who had received any inſtruction, and only one who had been baptized, was ſo much as ſuſpected of being guilty; and

* Rom. xii. 17. † 1 Tim. vi. 1. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19.
§ Eph. vi. 7, 8. ‖ 1 Cor. vii. 20—24. ¶ 1 Tim. vi. 2.

and he was afterwards acknowledged to be innocent; but the deepeſt in the conſpiracy were the ſlaves of thoſe perſons, who had oppoſed the moſt warmly all endeavours for their converſion. We may therefore depend on it, that ſucceſs in theſe endeavours will both be a ſecurity, and every way an advantage, to their proprietors. And if it doth procure the poor wretches themſelves a little more kind uſage, they will then be fitter to receive it; and at preſent, as much as can be ſafely allowed them is but their due. The apoſtle's injunction was made not only for ſlaves, but for Heathen ſlaves: *Maſters, give to your ſervants that which is juſt and equal; knowing that ye alſo have a Maſter in heaven* *; *neither is there reſpect of perſons with him* †. And if their becoming Chriſtians will help, as it certainly will, to obtain them ſuch treatment; putting together their condition and their numbers, there are but few things, which, even on that account, common humanity more obliges us to attempt.

Then as to the influence of Chriſtianity on the *Indians*, it muſt undoubtedly reſtrain their mutual barbarities, which it doth not appear what elſe will, and diſpoſe them to a ſettled and orderly life. By means of this, they will come to enjoy the benefit of agriculture, and of all the arts that are uſeful in ſociety: they will of conſequence grow happier and more numerous; and as they will become at the ſame time more harmleſs too, it would be both an immoral and a falſe policy, to envy them theſe advantages. They have yielded up to us a conſiderable part of their country; and it is but common gratitude, to ſhew them the way of living comfortably in the reſt. We have introduced amongſt them both diſeaſes and vices, which have deſtroyed great numbers of them; ſurely it is fit, that we ſhould communicate ſomething to them, which will do them good. It may be feared they are hitherto the worſe for their knowledge of us; but they will certainly be the better for the knowledge of our religion. And the more they are prejudiced againſt it by the wickedneſs of its profeſſors, the more need there is to lay before them in a full light the excellency of its precepts; and to convince them, that there are perſons, who not only believe, but practiſe

* Col. iv. 1. † Epheſ. vi. 9.

them. Nor ſhould it be forgotten, that every ſingle *Indian*, whom we make a Chriſtian, we make a friend and ally at the ſame time; both againſt the remaining Heathen, and a much more dangerous neighbour, from whoſe inſtigations almoſt all that we have ſuffered by them is allowed to have come.

But the temporal advantages of propagating Chriſtianity are infinitely the leaſt. If we allow but the truth of natural religion, we muſt admit the future, as well as preſent, happineſs of mankind to depend on preſerving and diffuſing the knowledge of that religion. And there is neither inſtance nor proſpect of either of theſe things being attempted by any other method, than that of preaching the goſpel; of which the doctrines and duties of nature make ſo large a part. If therefore it be of importance, that the people in our colonies ſhould worſhip the Maker of heaven and earth, and believe virtue to be his law; that the *Negroes* and *Indians* ſhould *be turned from idols, to ſerve the living and true God* *; and that all ſhould know, there will be a recompence hereafter to the juſt and to the unjuſt; whoever deſerves the name of Deiſt in a good ſenſe, as it ſtands oppoſed to Atheiſt, whoever is indeed an enemy to ſuperſtition, and a friend to mankind, will rejoice to have that faith carefully taught them, by which alone they will learn theſe momentous truths; to have it *told among the Heathen, that the Lord is King, and that he ſhall judge the people righteouſly* †.

But if *the goſpel of Chriſt*, beſides comprehending the ſyſtem of natural religion, be, by virtue of its own peculiar doctrines, *the power of God unto ſalvation* ‡: then every poſſible motive concurs, for being zealous in ſpreading it throughout the earth. Revelation indeed neither obliges nor permits us to paſs a hard ſentence on thoſe, who have never had it propoſed with ſufficient evidence. *To their own maſter they ſtand or fall* §: and of them only, *to whom much is given, ſhall much be required* ||. *For if there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not* ¶. But ſtill, *as all men have ſinned, and come ſhort of the*

* 1 Theſſ. i. 9. † Pſal. xcvi. 10. ‡ Rom. i. 16.
§ Rom. xiv. 4. || Luke xii. 48. ¶ 2 Cor. viii. 12.

the glory of God *, and there is but one *name under heaven whereby they can be ſaved* †; as Chriſtianity is inexpreſſibly more efficacious for the reformation of mankind than unaſſiſted reaſon; as our only aſſurance, either of receiving a future reward, or eſcaping future puniſhment, muſt ariſe from ſcripture; and we have no intimation in it of any perſon's enjoying that *life and immortality, which Jeſus Chriſt hath brought to light* ‡, but ſuch as believe in him; theſe conſiderations, without limiting at all the free mercies of God, cannot but ſhew us the great ſuperiority of our own condition, and make us aſk, with great ſolicitude, concerning others: *How then ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how ſhall they hear, without a preacher? And how ſhall they preach, except they be ſent* §? Our bleſſed Lord hath entruſted his followers, to preſerve his goſpel in purity, where it is, and communicate it, where it is not. By their faithful diſcharge of theſe duties formerly, we ourſelves were *delivered from the bondage of* Heatheniſm *into the glorious liberty of the children of God* ||. It now belongs to us, in our turn, to *ſtrengthen our brethren* ¶, and *call them that are afar off* **: and where ſhall we find more proper objects of our care and zeal?

Perhaps it may be ſaid, they ought to maintain their own teachers. But this cannot be expected from the Heathen, who are inſenſible of their want of them; nor from thoſe of our own people, who are too like Heathen, and have not the ſenſe of it which they ought. Such as have, do maintain their teachers, where they are able. For there are very indigent parts, as well as very opulent. Some whole provinces have no aſſiſtance at all from us. And in moſt, if not all places, we are only joint contributors. As ſoon as ever there is room for it, they will be left to build by themſelves on the foundation laid, and the ſociety will go on to new work. Inquiries are conſtantly made what each congregation can do; and miſſionaries have been withdrawn till they will do it. For we are not only deſirous, but under a neceſſity, of being

as

* Rom. iii. 23. † Acts iv. 12. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 10.
§ Rom. x. 14, 15. || Rom. viii. 21. ¶ Luke xxii. 32.
** Acts ii. 39.

as frugal as poſſible, by the daily increaſe of petitions for help.

But ſome will object farther, that all the aſſiſtance we can give Chriſtianity, is too much wanted in our own country, to admit of any ſchemes for propagating it in foreign ones. And would to God theſe perſons would aſk themſelves, whether they indeed wiſh to remove the objection which they make, or only argue againſt this and that way of encouraging religion, to ſave the expence of doing it in any way. A true and judicious friend will carefully avoid raiſing an oppoſition between two charities; which is a much ſurer method of hurting the one, than ſerving the other: whereas, with this precaution, a firſt ſcarce ever ſuffers conſiderably, if at all, by ſetting up a ſecond; but mens hearts are enlarged to contribute to both. Every ſingle member of the *Society for Promoting Chriſtian Knowledge* at home, was originally incorporated into ours for ſpreading it abroad. That ſociety is at this day promoting the ſame knowledge in the eaſt as well as here, whilſt we are doing it in the weſt. Many of us belong to both; and promiſe ourſelves a larger ſhare of the bleſſing of God in each for neglecting neither. In theſe nations great proviſion is made already; and greater, we hope, will daily be made, for offering ſalvation to mankind. They who will reject it after all, muſt do ſo, and take the conſequences. But let us, *in nothing terrified by our adverſaries, ſtrive together for the faith of the goſpel**: and not only ſuſtain a defenſive war, but ſhew, that attacking the dominions of our Lord and Maſter ſhall increaſe our zeal to extend them. Our colonies receive from hence a great deal of what is bad. We ſend them our malefactors; we ſend them our immoral and irreligious cuſtoms; we ſend them our infidel and profligate books. Surely we ought to do ſome good, where we do ſo much harm. And conſider, to whom is it done? To our countrymen and fellow-ſubjects; diſtant indeed from us in ſituation, but cloſely connected by the ſtrongeſt ties. To them, to their ſervants and neighbours, it is that we are imparting happineſs; and poſſibly ſecuring it to ourſelves, or our poſterity, there, if God would permit us at home to ſuffer what we deſerve.

Now,

* Phil. i. 27, 28.

Now, this unqueſtionably right deſign cannot be carried on, but under the direction of a regular ſociety. For without it, ſmall benefactions could not be applied at all; and large ones muſt be applied ſeparately, to great diſadvantage; no uniform influence could be preſerved, nor ſettled information had, nor any of that experience gained, which reſults from long and extenſive acquaintance with the ſtate of things. What ſort of perſons they are who compoſe this ſociety, will appear from the printed liſt. None of them receive any temporal advantage from being members of it. They are all obliged to ſubſcribe a yearly contribution to the good work which they undertake. A conſiderable number of the chief of them conſtantly attend upon it. And they will admit with pleaſure every ſerious Chriſtian who offers himſelf, and is qualified to aſſiſt in it. Their ſtanding rules are publicly known, allowed to be good, and faithfully obſerved. They give the world a yearly account of their ſucceſs, with an abſtract of their receipts and diſburſements. They deliver yearly the particulars of them to the Lord Chancellor and two chief juſtices. And they have proceeded from the beginning to this day with great unanimity in all their affairs.

It hath been pretended, indeed, that immoral and negligent men are employed as miſſionaries. And to ſay that this hath never once happened, would be going too far: but that it hath frequently happened, or ever for want of due care, is utterly falſe. Strict examination is made at firſt into the characters of all that are offered; ſtrict inquiry into their behaviour afterwards; and exact accounts required from them twice a year, of what duty they do, and what progreſs they make. The moſt earneſt requeſts, the moſt ſolemn adjurations are ſent, that all, who can, would give any uſeful intelligence relating to them: and great regard is always paid to ſuch intelligence; yet very few complaints are brought in, either from good will or bad. Too many, it muſt be owned, of deſperate fortunes and characters, who are or pretend to be in holy orders, tranſport themſelves into *America*, and behave there as it may be expected they will. But we have no concern with any, whoſe names are not ſeen in the public liſt of perſons receiving ſalaries from us. And the larger the number is of vicious clergymen, who go thither of their own

accord, the more is the need of ſending as many worthy ones as poſſible, to correct their influence.

Were there room, indeed, for making larger allowances, more perſons of great abilities might be had. Were there better opportunities for a learned education abroad, more of the natives of our colonies would be fitted for the work; which they would undertake with many advantages above ſuch as go from hence. And had they biſhops there, theſe perſons might be ordained without the inconveniencies of a long voyage: vacancies might be ſupplied in much leſs time; the primitive and moſt uſeful appointment of confirmation might be reſtored; and an orderly diſcipline exerciſed in the churches. Nor would ſuch an eſtabliſhment encroach at all, either on liberty of conſcience, which ought ever to be ſacredly preſerved, or on the preſent civil rights, either of the governors or people in our colonies. Nor would it bring their dependence on *Great-Britain* into any degree of that danger, which ſome perſons profeſs to apprehend ſo ſtrongly on this occaſion, who would make no manner of ſcruple about doing other things much more likely to deſtroy it; who are not terrified in the leaſt, that ſuch numbers there reject the epiſcopal order entirely; nor perhaps would be greatly alarmed, were ever ſo many to reject religion itſelf; though evidently, in proportion as either is thrown off, all dependence produced by it ceaſes of courſe. To this equally pious and harmleſs deſign, two great prelates *, now deceaſed, gave a thouſand pounds each; and a lady, incomparably more eminent for her virtues than her quality †, bequeathed the ſum of five hundred pounds laſt year to the ſame purpoſe; which God incline the hearts of all, in whoſe power it is, to promote as it deſerves! But in the mean time, let it not be imagined, that the difficulties under which we labour, are too heavy to be overcome. Difficulties are arguments for nothing, but more diligence, and more liberality. For if we ſtop till we have every thing that might be wiſhed, when ſhall we go on?

Another

* Arch. *Teniſon*, and Sir *J. Trelawney*, Bp. of *Winchester*.

† Lady *Elizabeth Haſtings*.

Another objection to the conduct of the ſociety is, that they have ſent miſſionaries to ſome places, in which there were already Chriſtian aſſemblies eſtabliſhed and ſupported. But in one ſort of theſe aſſemblies, there is no Chriſtian miniſtry, no celebration of the ſacraments of the goſpel: In another, infants are denied the ſacrament of baptiſm. And in the leaſt exceptionable, there are ſeveral things, in which the conſciences of many, we apprehend with great reaſon, cannot acquieſce; who were not, therefore, to be left deſtitute of public worſhip; eſpecially as our charter was granted, in expreſs terms, for *the maintenance of an orthodox clergy in thoſe parts*. And the members of this church, I am ſorry to ſay it, lying under peculiar burdens in one conſiderable province *, which other profeſſors of Chriſtianity do not, though equally diſſenters from the majority there, they ſeem of right entitled to ſome peculiar aſſiſtance in return. We have obtruded the ſervice of the church of *England* nowhere; we have ſettled no clergyman anywhere, without the inhabitants requeſting it, and contributing to it; we have ſent no ſucceſſor upon a vacancy, without their renewing that requeſt. But if the proviſion, which we have made for the people of our own communion, hath proved inſtrumental, at the ſame time, to bring others over into it, we hope there is very far from being any harm done. Indeed unity of profeſſion amongſt ourſelves, effected by methods of peace and charity, will greatly recommend our religion to the infidels; who elſe may be tempted to continue as they are, for want of knowing with whom to join.

We acknowledge it, whoever is taught Chriſtianity by our care, will be taught it as profeſſed in the church eſtabliſhed here by law. There can be no teaching at all, but in ſome

* In *New England*, they are rated to the ſupport of what the *Independents*, who are the greater part of that people, call, though without right, the Eſtabliſhed Church. And the goods of many have been ſeized, or their bodies impriſoned, for nonpayment. The *Anabaptiſts*, on their petition, were exempted from paying this rate; and the *Quakers*, without petitioning; but the petition of the members of our church was rejected.

N. B. This grievance hath been redreſſed, under the adminiſtration of Governor *Shirley*, in the province of *Maſſachuſets Bay*; and, I believe, ſince the year 1752, in the colony of *Connecticut* alſo.

particular form. We think our own the beſt. Every body thinks it far from the worſt. At leaſt our converts will have the Bible put into their hands, to judge for themſelves. And which is righter, that Heathens and perſons of no religion ſhould continue what they are, or become what we would make them? Our ſociety is by much the moſt conſiderable one for this purpoſe. And were it now to be erected, inſtead of having ſubſiſted ſo long, not a ſingle ſtep could be taken on any other footing than this; that the ſmaller part of thoſe, who wiſhed well to it, muſt be concluded by the greater.

So good a deſign, therefore, being ſo properly executed, the expences, which muſt attend it, ought to be ſupplied. *The Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the goſpel, ſhould live of the goſpel* *. And there is the ſame reaſon, the ſame neceſſity indeed, that the miſſionaries in *America* ſhould have due proviſion made for them, as that the apoſtles ſhould at firſt, or the miniſters of our pariſhes now. And if perſons of character, being at liberty, as they are, to exerciſe their function elſewhere, are willing to undertake ſuch an employment as this, at ſuch a diſtance, on ſo ſmall an allowance as they receive from the ſociety, they ought ſurely to have it raiſed for them very cheerfully; and *be counted worthy of double honour* †, in the ſenſe of recompence as well as eſteem, if it could be paid them.

But perhaps it will be ſaid, ſupporting deſigns of this nature is the clergy's buſineſs: let them take care of it. And ſo, God be thanked, we do; and ſo, I hope in God, we ſhall, whither we are helped in it more or leſs; in ſuch manner, as both to keep pace with the willing, and make amends for the unwilling. We deſire not to boaſt, and we need not to be aſhamed, of the proportion which we contribute. But we may, notwithſtanding, do very well to increaſe it. For there is ſo much expected of us, and we are ſo greatly concerned to anſwer every reaſonable expectation to the utmoſt, that if any of our order have omitted taking ſufficient notice of a charity ſo immediately related to their profeſſion, it is their duty, on many accounts, to make full compenſation to it without delay. It is indeed our duty, on every occaſion, at all times,

* 1 Cor. ix. 14. † 1 Tim. v. 17.

times, but eſpecially in an age when no part of our conduct will be interpreted favourably, to avoid all appearance, either of preferring *riches in this world* before being *rich in good works* *, or of *loving pleaſures more than God* †. St. *Paul took wages of* ſome *churches to do* others *ſervice* ‡. Let us, out of the wages which we take, do all the ſervice we can to the church of God; and *diſtribute* largely *to the neceſſities of the ſaints* §, particularly their ſpiritual ones.

But is the ſupport of this deſign incumbent on the clergy alone? Did not the laity originally maintain the apoſtles in their travels? And ought they not ſtill to be equally zealous, *that the word of the Lord may have free courſe, and be glorified* ‖? Do they not know, how very inconſiderable the benefices of far the greateſt part of the clergy are; what hoſpitality is required of the reſt of us; and how large demands are continually made upon us for charities of various kinds; to the poor of our pariſhes and neighbourhoods, of our brethren, their widows and orphans; to every pious and compaſſionate uſe, public or private? And are they not ſenſible alſo, that were we ever ſo deficient, this excuſes not them: that every man's duty is, not to guard againſt doing more good than comes to his ſhare, but to do willingly what he can; and that each one's reward ſhall be in proportion to his work?

Whoever, therefore, finds himſelf diſpoſed to make objections, let him examine what is at the bottom of them; whether it be not really diſregard to religion, or want of humanity; ſome groundleſs prejudice, or ſome wrong attachment to ſelf-intereſt or ſelf-gratification. If ſo, let him firſt plant the goſpel in his own heart, and all his pleas againſt contributing to the propagation of it will ſoon vaniſh.

Every man's charities, indeed, ought to be left to his own choice. But ſo many, even of thoſe who are bountiful in other ways, neglect pious uſes almoſt entirely, that good perſons have both opportunity and reaſon for allotting to theſe a large proportion of their beneficence. And amongſt theſe, as that now under conſideration is of too extenſive a nature

* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. † 2 Tim. iii. 4. ‡ 2 Cor. xi. 8.
§ Rom. xii. 13. ‖ 2 Theſſ. iii. 1.

to be thoroughly comprehended by every one, and at too great a diſtance to make any ſtrong impreſſion on the generality of the world, they who do form juſt conceptions of it, ſhould, in proportion to the ſmallneſs of their number, be the more liberal to it, as in truth there is need. The only certain income we have is a trifle, not ſixty pounds a year*. The voluntary ſubſcriptions, though they are ten times greater, are not a fifth part of the annual expence. Hitherto, therefore, almoſt all hath depended on occaſional gifts; which, after ſinking much lower than they were formely, for ſome few years increaſed again. On this encouragement, the ſociety, importuned continually for new miſſionaries, with an earneſtneſs which nothing but neceſſity could juſtify reſiſting, made a great addition to their number. And had the contributions of this laſt year riſen much above the preceding ones, it had been but too eaſy to have diſpoſed of them all. But on the contrary, though one noble benefaction of a thouſand pounds hath been given †, to be employed for the converſion of the negroes, yet thoſe to the other parts of our deſign have fallen very ſhort; and a heavy debt hath been of conſequence incurred. This may poſſibly reduce us to aſk aſſiſtance, in a method, of which, though authoriſed, we have ſeldom made uſe; being deſirous, that *he who ſheweth mercy*, might appear to do it *with cheerfulneſs* ‡, and not conſtrained by ſolicitations. But in whatever manner application is made to perſons, we truſt the ſame God, who hath provided for us wonderfully thus long, will now alſo diſpoſe their hearts to conſider, that on them it depends, whether ſuch a deſign, ſo far advanced, through ſo many difficulties, ſhall be carried on ſtill, and gain ground continually, as it eaſily may; or whether it ſhall fall back, and ſink into nothing, with very little hope of being ever revived; that he will move wiſe men to think what the public intereſt requires of them, and benevolent perſons to regard the private happineſs of their fellow-creatures; true Chriſtians, to ſupport and enlarge the kingdom of their Maſter with zeal; true Proteſtants, to ſilence effectually the boaſts and reproaches of the *Romaniſts* on this head;

* Now, in 1765, not ſeventy.

† By Mr. *Batt* of *Hampſhire*.

‡ Rom. xii. 8.

head; and all true friends of our religious eſtabliſhment, to endeavour that it may gain as honourable a pre-eminence as poſſible, over the reſt of the reformed churches, in ſo good a work.

Perſons in plentiful circumſtances, and perhaps at a loſs for ways in which they may give alms, will here find one undoubtedly proper way. And perſons in arrear to religion and charity, have an excellent opportunity offered them, of paying the debt. They who plead the multitude of other expences, might, a very great part of them, by withdrawing but a little of what they ought from their luxury and vanity, qualify themſelves for liberalities, which will turn hereafter to a much better account. And ſuch as make the increaſe of taxes their excuſe, ought to conſider, that as Providence hath brought that increaſe upon us, by permitting us to ſuffer ſo much from our enemies, in that part of the world, where we have done ſo little for God; eſpouſing his cauſe is the likelieſt method of deriving a bleſſing on our own; and if we neglect it, whatever may befal us there, we muſt impute to ourſelves. We enjoy very great advantages from thence; the government, large revenues; the nation in general, a moſt beneficial trade; every one of us, ſomething or another, uſeful or agreeable in life. It is therefore our common concern, both to do good where we have received it; and to do it in ſuch manner, as may beſt ſecure our continuing to receive it. But they more eſpecially, who are now raiſing fortunes by commerce with our *American* ſettlements; or who poſſeſs acquired or hereditary eſtates, of which that commerce laid the foundation, they ſhould think often, how much hath accrued to them from the produce of theſe colonies, the country of theſe *Indians*, the labour of theſe negroes; and reflect very ſeriouſly, what returns poſſibly juſtice, at leaſt gratitude, and in many caſes prudence alſo, as well as piety, direct them to make.

Some perhaps may approve one part of this undertaking beyond the reſt; and whatever they give, will be applied, if they deſire it, to that alone. Some may be unwilling to let their benefactions appear: and ſuch may with eaſe tranſmit them privately: the donation will be acknowledged, the donor unknown. But though charity given in ſecret, from a principle of humility, be laudable in the higheſt degree; yet when

when the motive is fear of ridicule or cenſure from a profane age, this argues a weakneſs of mind, very dangerous to thoſe who are influenced by it, and very prejudicial to religion; which cannot have a more ſeaſonable ſervice done it, than if perſons of rank and influence, all perſons indeed, who inwardly wiſh well to it, would openly patronize the ſeveral deſigns formed to promote it.

The deſign now before us, both deſerves and requires a general co-operation, to produce its complete effect: that they who are able, ſhould contribute to it, in proportion to their ability; and they who are not, ſpeak well of it, and pray for it: that we of the ſociety ſhould be vigilant and active, prudent and impartial in our adminiſtration: that perſons in authority abroad ſhould countenance and protect the work; for in their power it is, to forward or obſtruct it very greatly; that the people in general there, ſhould not only be willing to let all under them and around them *partake of the grace of life* *, but earneſtly invite them to it, *with meekneſs of wiſdom*, and by the moſt prevalent of arguments, *a good converſation* †. But beyond the reſt it is neceſſary for every one concerned in the immediate execution of the deſign, always to remember, that bad as it is in other teachers of the goſpel to behave in a manner unworthy of their profeſſion, it will be yet worſe in them, if they take an uncommon character upon themſelves, only to diſhonour it; and *compaſs ſea and land* ‡, with no other effect, than to make *God's name be blaſphemed amongſt the Gentiles* §: that they ought, with peculiar diligence, to *follow righteouſneſs, faith, charity, peace* ‖; *holding faſt the faithful word, as they have been taught, that they may be able, by ſound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainſayers* ¶; that they ought to *be inſtant, in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon; to watch, endure afflictions, and make full proof of their miniſtry* **, *ſhewing themſelves in all things patterns of good works* ††.

Theſe then are our ſeveral duties; and great will be our reward for performing them. Let us therefore, each in his ſtation, *ariſe and be doing; and the Lord be with us* ‡‡.

SER.

* 1 Pet. iii. 7. † James iii. 13. ‡ Matth. xxiii. 15.
§ Rom. ii. 24. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 22. ¶ Tit. i. 9.
** 2 Tim. iv. 2, 5. †† Tit. ii. 7. ‡‡ 1 Chron. xxii. 16.

SERMON CXXXII.

(Preached in the Pariſh Church of *Chriſt-Church, London*, on *Thurſday, May* 6. 1743. being the time of the yearly meeting of the children educated in the charity-ſchools, in and about the cities of *London* and *Weſtminſter*.)

The Great Uſefulness of Schools for the Poor, when Regulated by Wisdom and Prudence.

Romans xiv. 16.

Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of.

AMONGST many excellencies, which unite to recommend our holy religion, there are few that ſhew its benevolent ſpirit in a ſtronger light, than its requiring us, not only to abſtain from every thing ſinful ourſelves, but carefully to avoid giving any occaſion of ſin to others *. If the moſt innocent action that we do, will be thought a wrong one by any of our brethren, we are ſtrictly bound, either to omit it †, if we can without conſiderable inconvenience, or at leaſt to guard and explain it, as well as the nature of the caſe will permit: that ſo we may neither tempt him to cenſure us uncharitably, nor to imitate us againſt his conſcience. The former of theſe is the danger, which the words of the text moſt naturally expreſs; and to keep clear of it, is a matter of great importance.

Attention to obviate cenſures may often prevent us from acting, as well as others from judging, amiſs. And where we act ever ſo rightly, yet if we are ſuſpected of erring, though

* Rom. xiv. † 1 Cor. viii.

though in circumſtances only, and ſeem negligent of that ſuſpicion, it may grieve good perſons, and perhaps weaken their union with us; it may entirely ſeparate from us the inconſiderate and wavering; it may give a handle to the bad for great triumph and miſrepreſentation; and both incline them to grow ſtill worſe, and enable them to do ſtill more harm. Whereas prudent care, firſt not to deſerve reproach, and then not to lie under it, may procure us regard from mankind, by ſhewing regard to them; may ſecure the well diſpoſed on our ſide, and furniſh them with the means of defending us; may convince even the prejudiced of ſome of their miſtakes, and moderate their vehemence in the reſt. At leaſt, we ſhall thus exerciſe a true Chriſtian temper, improve ourſelves, and be exemplary to others.

But though we are concerned to vindicate all our actions from injurious charges, yet our virtuous actions eſpecially. When things merely lawful are condemned, the damage may be ſmall; but if worthy deeds are vilified, religion ſuffers deeply. And therefore, as we are now aſſembled to patronize a deſign, which we apprehend to be a very valuable one, but which ſome have oppoſed and decried, the erecting of ſchools for the children of the poor, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

I. That it is a *good* work.

II. What are the right methods to prevent its *being evil ſpoken of*.

III. What courſe we are to take, if that cannot be prevented entirely.

Little remains to be ſaid indeed upon any of theſe points, which hath not been ſaid often already. But if perſons will repeat objections, the anſwers muſt be repeated too. And the plaineſt truths, as they cannot influence at all, if they are forgotten, ought to influence us the more, not the leſs, for being frequently inculcated.

I. *Firſt* then it muſt be ſhewn, that this method of giving the children of the poor a Chriſtian education is a *good* work.

Now if we believe Chriſtianity true, we muſt believe it is the way to eternal happineſs. And were we to doubt of its truth, we muſt notwithſtanding ſee it is the way to preſent happineſs. For it confeſſedly teaches, in the cleareſt manner,

and inforces by the ſtrongeſt motives, every thing conducive to private and public welfare, and nothing elſe doth ſo. Natural religion, as diſtinct from Chriſtianity, whatever zeal may be pretended for it, neither hath been, nor is likely to be, ſeriouſly propagated: nor is it capable of carrying in it the direction, the encouragement, or the terror, that revelation doth. Virtue, without religion, will perpetually be modelled by peoples fancies, and overturned by their paſſions and intereſts, for want of the hopes and fears of futurity to counterbalance them. And human laws, the only reſtraint beſides, extend but to a ſmall part of our behaviour; and without principle, they will be faultily contrived, and remiſsly or partially executed; men will elude them in ſome caſes, break through them at all adventures in others; and, having once learnt to deſpiſe death, as they well may if nothing follows it, will have little fear of what the magiſtrate can inflict. All ages and nations have found theſe things true; they are viſibly ſo in our own, to an uncommon degree; and experience joins with reaſon to acknowledge, that ſcripture points out the only remedy: *All thy children ſhall be taught of God, and great ſhall be the peace of thy children* *.

If then the belief of Chriſtianity be thus neceſſary, inſtruction in it ought to be early. The abſolute ignorance, in which we are born, and the propenſity we manifeſt immediately, to receive impreſſions from what we ſee and hear, are an evident proof of our Maker's deſign, that we ſhould be formed by education into what we are to be. And had this never been neglected, error and wickedneſs had never prevailed. Now indeed, ſince they have, inſtruction will, in moſt places, more or leſs, lead children into what is wrong. But ſtill it is the ſureſt method we can take, to preſerve them from it. Were their friends to teach them nothing, would their own paſſions, and the companions they would chooſe, be better tutors? Their reaſon indeed poſſibly might, and very poſſibly might not. At leaſt it would come too late, and be minded too little, to be truſted alone. Where young perſons are taught from the firſt ever ſo well, and governed ever ſo prudently, it doth not always ſucceed. But ſuch care muſt af-

* Iſa. liv. 13.

ford vaſtly greater hope, than if they are left to themſelves without any, till bad notions and cuſtoms have taken root, till their appetites are grown vehement, and their tempers ſtubborn, till they laugh at advice, and diſdain authority. If then we would prevent all the miſery ſuch wretches may ſuffer, all the miſchief they may do, all the burthens they may bring on ſociety; if we would make them uſeful to the world, and happy in themſelves; the plain rule is, *train* them *up* when *children in the way they ſhould go, and* probably *when they are old, they will not depart from it* *.

But by whom ſhall this be done in the caſe of the poor? Unqueſtionably it is the duty of their parents; but many of them are orphans. Many have parents, who teach, or allow them to be taught, all manner of evil; and moſt of them have ſuch as want leiſure, or capacity, or diligence, to teach them the good, which they ought; and at the ſame time are unable or unwilling to pay others for teaching them. Great numbers of them indeed are removed early into families of better rank. But how very little proſpect there is in general, that more care will be taken of them there, than their neareſt relations took at home, I need not ſay. Will then the public inſtruction of the church ſuffice? But alas! what multitudes of them are there, who ſeldom or never go thither? The laws that require it are not executed; their parents have not uſed them to it; their maſters are indifferent about it, or perhaps make it difficult to them; and what wonder, if, in theſe circumſtances, the poor creatures neglect it? Beſides, there is ſome degree of previous knowledge requiſite to their attending public worſhip to good effect. And the miniſter, were they always duly ſent to him, cannot alone ground them ſufficiently in the firſt elements of that knowledge; nor in larger pariſhes make any conſiderable advance towards it.

What further proviſion might be made in this important affair, either by enacting new laws, or enforcing the old ones, is not a point to be conſidered here; but only, what can be attempted by private zeal and prudence; the laws and the execution of them continuing ſuch as they are, and probably will be.

Now

* Prov. xxii. 6.

Now as to perſons in higher circumſtances, they muſt and will be left to themſelves, to educate their youth juſt as they pleaſe; and they, and we, muſt take the conſequences. But the poor are many of them deſirous to have theirs educated rightly. And moſt of them may be induced to it by thoſe additional encouragements, of clothing and fitting them for buſineſs, which are ſingly very excellent charities, and, joined with religious inſtruction, make a very complete one. Surely there can be no doubt then, whether a method ſo beneficial every way, to the children, the parents, the public, ſhould be joyfully embraced. The wiſeſt and beſt of ancient legiſlators and philoſophers have all preſcribed a ſtrict education of youth, as the foundation of every thing good. Both the Jewiſh and Chriſtian inſtitutions abſolutely enjoin it. In Proteſtant countries abroad, teachers are univerſally provided for the children of the poor; who are in moſt places bound by law to become their ſcholars *. Our governors at home, both in church and ſtate, with the whole body of ſerious perſons of all denominations, have ſhewn their approbation of this deſign. The only perſon, who hath attempted publicly to prove it hurtful, hath attempted, in the ſame book, to prove *vice a public benefit* †. I know but one author more of the leaſt note, who hath declared againſt theſe ſchools; and he fairly acknowledges, that, "under a proper regulation, ſomething "like them may be commendable ‡," though he was led, by unhappy prejudices and falſe reports, to inveigh with great bitterneſs againſt the conduct of them.

II. Let us therefore inquire, in the *ſecond* place, what are true methods to prevent this *good* work from *being evil ſpoken of*.

Now theſe in general muſt be, giving no occaſion for juſt objections; and returning ſufficient anſwers to unjuſt ones. Undoubtedly the former is the main thing. For wrong conduct neither can nor ought to be defended; and right conduct will in a great meaſure defend itſelf; yet not ſo entirely, but that a ſeaſonable vindication may be neceſſary for the beſt cauſe. I ſhall therefore endeavour to ſet forth jointly, what

* See the Dean of *Peterborough*'s ſermons, at the meeting of theſe children, 1740, p. 23.

† *Fable of the Bees.* ‡ CATO's *Letters*, No. 133.

ought to be done; and, where any accuſation worth notice hath been brought, what is done, ſo far as I have been able to learn, in the choice, the management, and the diſpoſal of theſe children.

1. The liberty of *chooſing* fit objects for this charity is a great advantage, which hoſpitals for foundlings have not; and ſhould be uſed with great uprightneſs and diſcretion. If we admit thoſe, whoſe parents or other near friends are able and likely to give them a proper education, we divert the bounty, which we undertake to direct, from ſuch as need it; and there is but too much ground to apprehend, that ſome who have no need may requeſt our aſſiſtance. If we ſend in children to be maintained at a common charge, whom we ſhould elſe have brought up at our own; this is burthening the ſchool to eaſe ourſelves, and poſſibly receiving more from it, than we contribute to it. And if we allow the recommendations of powerful friends, or the entreaties of dependants, to engage us in undue preference; it is purchaſing favour from the one, or the falſe reputation of good-nature from the other, at the expence of our character as faithful ſtewards.

The next conſideration, after the neceſſities of the children, ſhould be their fitneſs; both of mind, to take in the inſtruction, which they are to have; and of body, to go through the buſineſs, for which they are deſigned; otherwiſe the pains and money, ſpent upon them, may be quite thrown away.

Where theſe things are equal, or nearly ſo, the offspring of induſtrious and good perſons, ordinarily ſpeaking, ſhould be ſure of admiſſion before others; both as the proſpect of ſucceſs with them is much fairer, and as their parents may juſtly expect the comfort of having this diſtinction ſhewn them by the profeſſed patrons of religion and virtue; which will alſo partake of the encouragement and countenance that they receive. Yet if the fund, intruſted with us, can be extended further, to the families of negligent, or even groſsly wicked creatures; as they certainly want inſtruction more, ſo we ought not to deſpair of their improving by it. If they can be kept, for any conſiderable time, ſeparate from their wretched friends; though the coſt will be greater, yet the advantage is

ſo viſible, both in ſpeculation and in fact *, that very much good might be expected from this method, were it more practiſed. But even if they cannot be ſeparated, yet what they learn at ſchool will be ſome antidote againſt what they ſee at home; beſides that bad parent will often aſſiſt the endeavours that are uſed to keep their children from becoming like them, and now and then have been ſhamed and reformed by them, inſtead of corrupting them. This kind proviſion may indeed make ſome parents only the more idle and extravagant; and ſo may that of parochial relief, or of hoſpitals for the ſick. But for the moſt part, they who are thus worthleſs, would be equally ſo, if all theſe benefactions were aboliſhed. The ſame ſort of perſons neglected their children, before charity ſchools were known, who do it now. And it is great mercy to the poor young creatures to enable them to ſay, *When my father and my mother forſake me, the Lord taketh me up* †.

2. In the *management* of theſe children, as teaching them religion is the chief thing propoſed, ſo it ought to employ the chief attention; which it may without hindrance, indeed with advantage, to the other parts of their education. In order to this end, getting by heart their catechiſm, and their prayers, and ſelect portions of ſcripture, is a ſtep by no means to be omitted or deſpiſed. For experience hath taught the need of fixing thus in their memories at firſt, what their underſtandings will afterwards ripen gradually to comprehend. But if this one ſtep be miſtaken for the whole, they may be brought up in all the form of religion, with ſcarce any meaning accompanying it. And though very general and confuſed ſentiments of piety and duty may often be of great uſe, both in directing and reſtraining perſons, yet ſometimes it is poſſible they may do harm; and more diſtinct ones cannot fail of being, in proportion, more ſafe and beneficial. Their teachers, therefore, ſhould very carefully explain to them, as ſoon and as clearly as they can, every thing which they oblige them to repeat; and make proper trials, from time to time, of their apprehending, as well as remembering, what they are taught; in which part of their work they may be greatly

* Particularly in the girls ſchool, belonging to the pariſh of St. *James, Weſtminſter.*

† Pſal. xxvii. 10.

ly aſſiſted, partly by ſome of the printed expoſitions, with which they ſhould always be furniſhed, and partly by informing themſelves what methods are taken in the neighbouring ſchools of beſt repute. Another very advantageous and very pleaſing way of increaſing their acquaintance with religion, would be, turning their attention, as they read the Bible, to the more uſeful parts of its hiſtory, by familiar and ſhort remarks upon them; ſuch as their inſtructors can make, and they can enter into, without difficulty. Nor would it be at all a hard matter, by the help of almoſt any one of the ſmall pieces written of late in defence of Chriſtianity, to give them ſo much inſight into the grounds and evidences of it, as will furniſh them with much better reaſons for believing, than they will ever have for diſbelieving it. And as this is, at all times, a piece of juſtice due to reaſonable creatures, ſo it is, at the preſent time, peculiarly neceſſary to a moſt unhappy degree.

The knowledge thus inſtilled, muſt be conſtantly applied to the producing of ſuitable diſpoſitions. And above all, there muſt be diligently imprinted on their hearts a deep reverence of God, as the Almighty and all-ſeeing Ruler of the world; who hath given ſuch laws to men, as he knows are neceſſary for their good; and will make us everlaſtingly happy or miſerable, as we obey or tranſgreſs them. This is a principle, which will operate from the firſt, on every capacity, in every caſe; will make duty appear important, and ſin dreadful; will teach them to feel the inſufficiency of their natural ſtrength, and to rejoice moſt heartily in the grace of the goſpel; to be ſincere and earneſt in their prayers, regular and watchful in their lives, and through the whole of their courſe mindful of the end*.

Conſtant attendance on public worſhip is one ineſtimable benefit, which this education ſecures to children. And to render it as uſeful to them as poſſible, they ſhould be diligently taught, and I doubt not but they are, to approach the houſe of God with the utmoſt ſerioufneſs; to hearken reverently to his word read and preached; and perform their part of the liturgy

* See the Lord Biſhop of *Sodor* and *Man's* ſermon, preached on the ſame occaſion with this, in the year 1724.

iturgy in ſuch a manner as may beſt engage their own attention, and yet give others no diſturbance, by the noiſe of their reſponſes, or the loudneſs of their ſinging: concerning which particulars, expreſs directions have been given by the truſtees. The indiſcretion of teaching them difficult and unuſual tunes is, I hope, nearly corrected every where. But a reaſonable degree of ſkill in the common ones, will be a needful ſupport of the harmony of the congregation, a means of familiarizing good thoughts to their minds, and of making divine ſervice more cheerful and pleaſing to them; which they ſhould be engaged by every motive to frequent, as long as they live, elſe all that they have been taught will ſoon wear out, and the Lord's day become the moſt ruinous, inſtead of the moſt beneficial, part of their time.

It muſt be expected, that we ſhould recommend to theſe children the faith and worſhip of our own communion, as all other Chriſtians do; and teach them that reſpect to the church that they are members of, and the miniſters who officiate in it, which the ſcripture *, in very ſtrong terms, requires they ſhould have. But all this both may and ought to be done with ſuch temper and prudence, as not in the leaſt to ſerve the purpoſes of ſuperſtition and uncharitableneſs, or civil or religious tyranny, but of true piety and virtue alone; which they will never learn from thoſe of whom they think either ill or meanly. And whatever deſigns of carrying things further have been either juſtly or unjuſtly ſuſpected, ſome time ago, in ſome few caſes, yet there doth not appear any ground of ſuſpicion remaining. And as I believe no ſet of clergy, ſince the world became Chriſtian, were ever ſo fully and generally convinced, as ours at preſent, of the wickedneſs and folly of making attempts upon the liberties of mankind, ſo every obſerving perſon muſt ſee, that this danger is far from being an imminent, or an increaſing one. Tragical fears, it muſt be owned, were entertained, or pretended, at firſt, of the immoderate power which the inſtitution of theſe ſchools would give us. But time and experience hath thoroughly ſhewn, how very little reaſon there was, on any ſuch account, either for us to be fond of the ſcheme, or the laity jealous of it.

The

* Matth. xviii. 17. 1 Theſſ. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17.

The enemies of religion, indeed, will of courſe exclaim againſt the greatneſs of our influence, even whilſt they deſpiſe us for the ſmallneſs of it: but all others may ſurely ſee cauſe to wiſh, that we had much more than we have, for good purpoſes; and God forbid we ſhould either deſire or uſe any to promote bad ones.

Next after the duties that we owe to our Maker, Chriſtianity requires obedience to our earthly governors. And the government with which we are now bleſſed, is ſo neceſſary for the preſervation of every thing valuable to us, that all perſons of all ranks ſhould be habituated from their earlieſt years to pray for it, and honour it, and live contentedly and thankfully under it; but thoſe of low rank particularly, *to be quiet, and do their own buſineſs* *; *not exerciſing themſelves in matters too high for them* †. And if this rule were either tranſgreſſed, or neglected, by the directors or teachers of our charity ſchools, it would be an inſuperable objection, ſo long as it continued, againſt encouraging ſuch of them as were thus fundamentally miſmanaged. But indeed there hath been found, on repeated inquiry, very good reaſon to be ſatisfied, that the faults of this kind, which there might be once, never reached far, and have been long ago reformed. The imputation, therefore, now would be grievouſly unjuſt: but there cannot be too ſtrict a caution to avoid all appearance, not only of diſloyalty, but of every party regard of every ſort, in the whole conduct of this deſign; for much of its ſupport, and much of its benefit, abſolutely depends upon that one thing.

Together with the habits of religion and obedience to lawful authority, theſe children ſhould be taught every other that is uſeful and good. Their moral behaviour, a point of vaſtly more conſequence than their learning, ſhould be diligently watched, both in the ſchool, and as much as poſſible out of it too; for which purpoſe they are diſtinguiſhed by a peculiar dreſs: and their parents ſhould be earneſtly warned, not to undo what their inſtructors are doing. Ill-humour, idleneſs, indecency, lying, diſhoneſty, profaneneſs, ſhould be ſeverely puniſhed as often as they are obſerved: and if any of

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 11. † Pſal. cxxxi.

of them corrupts the reſt, or appears incorrigible himſelf, he ſhould be immediately diſmiſſed; and no falſe tenderneſs, or mean-ſpirited fear of diſobliging, ſhewn either by teachers or truſtees. For maintaining the credit of a ſchool, is the ſure way of providing for the ſupport of it.

But particularly humility ſhould be inſtilled into them with ſingular care. They ſhould underſtand, that the loweſt of thoſe whom their own parents maintain, are for that very reaſon their ſuperiors; and that no education, given as an alms, can be a ground for thinking highly of themſelves. Their uſage in all reſpects ſhould be anſwerable to ſuch leſſons. Cleanlineſs ſhould be required of them, as far as ever their employments allow it; but no extraordinary proviſion ſhould be made for it, nor the leaſt affectation of nicety tolerated in either ſex. Their clothes ſhould be no better, if ſo good, as they may hope to wear all the reſt of their lives; no gaiety of colour, no trifling ornaments permitted; nor any diſtinction between them and other children, in which they can poſſibly be tempted to take pleaſure. If they are fed, their food ſhould be of the coarſeſt ſort, and not more than enough. If they are lodged, it ſhould be in a manner that is ſuitable to every thing elſe. For, beſides that frugality is a moſt important branch of faithfulneſs in the management of charities, *it is good that they ſhould bear the yoke in their youth* *; be inured to the treatment they muſt expect to receive: and wrong-judged indulgence is the greateſt cruelty that can be exerciſed towards them.

Theſe things, with others to be mentioned in their due places, require much diligence and prudence, but, if poſſible, yet more piety and ſerioufneſs, in their maſters and miſtreſſes. If they have the religion and morals of their children at heart, they will find means, with moderate abilities, and few and artleſs words, to give them a ſtrong tincture of both. But if they are lukewarm and indifferent about the matter, they will take little pains, and be little minded; and nothing will be learnt beyond a few forms. Therefore in the choice of them, not their poverty, not the recommendation of others, not our own deſire of ſerving them, ſhould determine us, but merely

* Lam. iii. 27.

their fitneſs in theſe principal points; for the want of which, no qualifications elſe, either natural or acquired, can ever compenſate. Nor is chooſing them diſcreetly by any means ſufficient, without ſuperintending them continually afterwards; to examine what progreſs is made under them; to excite or reſtrain, to praiſe or reprove, to ſupport or diſmiſs them, as their behaviour ſhall give cauſe.

The miniſters of their ſeveral pariſhes, I believe, do not fail, as occaſion offers, to countenance and aſſiſt them, in the religious part of their work eſpecially. And would they beſtow pretty frequently ſome kind advice both upon them and their ſcholars, the good conſequences of it might reach further than at the firſt view may appear. For if being taught their duty makes theſe children viſibly better, other perſons, it may be hoped, will teach theirs alſo; but if it doth not, a haſty concluſion will immediately be drawn by too many, that religion doth harm, or at leaſt no good.

One great help, both to the underſtanding and practiſing of religion, is being able to read. The will of God is contained in his written word: and why have we it in our mother tongue, but that all may be acquainted with it? We are often reminded, that perſons ought to judge for themſelves: this is qualifying them for it. By the means of pious books, which that excellent *Society for Promoting Chriſtian Knowledge*, amongſt their many other good works, have provided for the poor at very cheap rates, they who can read, may have at all times plain and familiar inſtructions and warnings concerning each part of their duty, which they can review at every leiſure hour, dwell upon frequently, and fix in their hearts. Many of them cannot attend on public ſervice near ſo often as they would: reading will make them ſome amends for this. Many grow inſenſibly negligent and thoughtleſs: reading will awaken them, *and ſtrengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die* *. They may indeed learn wickedneſs from books; but they may alſo learn full as much of it without them, by the diſcourſe which they hear every day. And as good books will be put into the hands of theſe children firſt, and teach them to abhor bad ones, and enable them

* Rev. iii. 2.

them to ſpend their time agreeably and profitably alone, and bring them, of conſequence, neither to need nor love dangerous company, there can be no doubt, in their caſe, on which ſide the benefit lies. But, beſides religious advantages, being able to read is of very great uſe in all common buſineſs: and ſcarce any body hath ſervants who are unable, but on one occaſion or another he finds conſiderable inconveniencies from it; which is likewiſe the caſe of writing and accounts. If, indeed, the poorer ſort were to be carried on ſo far in the two laſt accompliſhments, as to give them an expectation of living by their pen, it would neither be charity nor prudence, but only diſtreſſing their betters; amongſt whom there are multitudes of perſons thus qualified, ready at all times for employment. But ſome low degree of ſkill in this way is already too common, either to make them grow vain, or others murmur at them: and the more it approaches towards being univerſal, the ſmaller will be the danger, and the greater the benefit. In country villages, indeed, writing may be leſs needful; and poſſibly may turn the minds of the children, or of their parents for them, to ſome other buſineſs than huſbandry. And therefore, in ſuch places, it may perhaps be as well omitted; and, I believe, commonly is. But reading muſt be ſerviceable in all places. For however uſeleſs or hurtful to perſons in low life the higher kind of improvements may be, which is a point moſt abſurdly laboured in ſpeaking againſt charity ſchools, where no ſuch things are taught, yet enabling the meaneſt people to carry on their buſineſs more commodiouſly, and know their duty more thoroughly (the almoſt only uſes they will ever find for their learning, if religiouſly educated), muſt ſurely have a tendency to make them better, not worſe. Ignorance and ſtupidity, for which ſome, though unwilling to own it, have pleaded ſtrenuouſly on this occaſion *, who on others accuſe the clergy as the great promoters of them, are neither virtues, nor friends to virtue. On the contrary, moſt of thoſe are abundantly *wiſe to do evil, who to do good have no knowledge* †.

* See *An Eſſay on Charity and Charity Schools*, p. 304, 353, 370.

† Jer. iv. 23.

But ſtill, as work is what all theſe children are deſtined for, it ſhould be conſtantly had in view; and they ſhould enter upon it whilſt they are at ſchool, if poſſible. It will make them uſeful at preſent, and both able and willing to work afterwards. It will put vain and idle fancies out of their heads; and ſhew all the world, what is really aimed at. It will ſilence the principal objection of enemies, and remove the only ſcruple of many true friends. Accordingly, for ſome years paſt, it hath been ſtrongly inſiſted on by almoſt every preacher upon the ſubject; warmly recommended by the worthy ſociety before-mentioned, who were the firſt authors of this whole deſign; and is, I doubt not, as earneſtly deſired by the truſtees, as it can be by the public, whoſe expectations are perfectly reaſonable, excepting that they are a little too impatient.

Many right and excellent undertakings are ſurrounded with vaſtly more difficulties in the execution, than immediately ſhew themſelves. Truſtees of leiſure and activity to attempt ſuch a charge, and of ſkill and intereſt enough to conduct it with ſucceſs, cannot be had in an inſtant for every ſchool. Maſters and miſtreſſes, very valuable in other reſpects, may be unqualified in this, or too fully employed already to undertake more; adding ſupernumerary ones would be chargeable; and ſubſtituting better upon the whole, may at preſent be impracticable. Doubts alſo may ariſe, on very juſt grounds, what work to try. Children are not fit for all ſorts: manufactures proper for them are not ready at hand every where; and ſetting up ſuch on purpoſe, as would require any conſiderable number of them, might be an expence and a riſk very imprudent, on ſo uncertain a fund as charity. Beſides, where manufactures, which might be ſuitable to them, are eſtabliſhed, the workmen concerned in them can uſually ſupply them very fully with their own children; and heavy complaints would be made, and many contributions withdrawn, if others interfered to take the bread out of their mouths. It is ſaid indeed, that hands are wanting; but the truth is, employments are wanting in moſt places, for theſe very young creatures. Their parents can make no profit of them; elſe they certainly would, inſtead of ſending them to ſchool. The pariſh workhouſes can few of them find any work for the

children

children brought up in them, that turns to account. And moſt unhappily, ſeveral of theſe difficulties are the greateſt in this city; where yet the number of thoſe, who want ſuch a proviſion, is and muſt be the largeſt.

However, till fuller employment can be had for them, they are much better employed at ſchool, than they would be elſe. How are other poor children, whether maintained by their parents or the public rates, ſpending their time? Viſibly, the moſt part of them, neither in doing nor learning any one thing that is good; but as much of the contrary, as ever they will and can; whilſt theſe are kept, all of them in a conſiderable degree, and ſuch as are lodged at their ſchools entirely, from bad company and bad habits; from which their parents have not leiſure to keep them, if they had always inclination; they are accuſtomed to application and confinement, to orderlineſs and obedience, which will greatly prepare them for keeping cloſe to work hereafter: they are bred up in the preeepts of honeſt induſtry: they have it upon their minds from the firſt, that they are to get their living that way, and no other; and are at laſt all put out to it.

Surely theſe conſiderations muſt have the effect, on all thinking perſons, of reſtraining their cenſures, though by no means their wiſhes. For it is both to be wiſhed moſt ardently, and endeavoured moſt heartily, that every obſtacle to ſo excellent an improvement, as that of introducing work, may as ſoon as poſſible be every where overcome. This is not a thing, which you, who are the managers of theſe charities, are driven into; and excuſing yourſelves from it, as long as you can. You very well know, how important a duty induſtry is. You neither have, nor can have, any inducement to diſcourage it in this caſe; but all the reaſon in the world to the contrary; and ſuch, as abſurdly clamour againſt you, would give a much better and very welcome proof of their zeal, if they would aſſiſt you, and ſhare the difficulties of the attempt with you. But, without waiting for what is ſo little to be expected, there are ſome ſchools, where the children do work: why may not their methods and regulations be inquired into, and imitated by others? All the new erected ſchools in *Ireland* join labour with inſtruction: probably ſomething might be learnt from them. Perſons of experience

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in various kinds of buſineſs in this great city, could ſurely, ſome of them, ſuggeſt what at leaſt would deſerve trial. For the girls eſpecially one ſhould think employment might be found; and for moſt of them, I believe, is: complete employment, where they live together; and where they do not, a good deal, in making, for inſtance, their own and others coarſe cloaths. For as to fine work of any ſort, it would be raiſing them above the rank for which they are intended; and might therefore be a worſe and more laſting miſchief, than ſetting them to none. What either ſex can do, perhaps, will ſeldom turn to much profit; but merely doing any thing that tends to uſefulneſs, will be ſo great an advantage to them of itſelf, that ſome danger, nay ſome certainty of loſs by it at firſt, may very well be borne for the ſake of it. Or to prevent this, if any perſon would hire, or even accept of their ſervice, for one part of the day or week; the remainder of it might be very ſufficient for their other inſtruction. Or whenever their parents could keep them well employed, provided aſſurance was given that they did ſo, that might be allowed; eſpecially in the country, where, according to the different ſeaſons of the year, there are very buſy and very leiſure times; and their friends will be much the readier to ſend them at the latter, for being ſure of their aſſiſtance at the former. Their learning, it muſt be acknowledged, will go on the more ſlowly for it, and their teachers will have more trouble with them; but, ſooner or later, they will be taught as much as they need. And accordingly I ſee with great pleaſure, that the printed rules of the truſtees have expreſsly provided, indeed for every thing right and proper in the management of their truſt, that can well be thought of, but particularly for leave to be given in this caſe. And were there exact accounts procured from every part of the nation, what rules are obſerved in the ſeveral ſchools, with the reaſons of them: I am perſuaded it would be a means of vindicating them in moſt things, as well as directing them better in ſome. I ſhall only add further under this head, that where labour is not made part of their buſineſs, it will be adviſeable, to take the children young and to keep them no longer, than till they have acquired ſome competent degree of knowledge and good princi-

ples. For ſo they will have all that they can have; work as ſoon as poſſible, and other inſtruction in the mean while.

3. The manner of *diſpoſing* of them, when they come to be diſmiſſed, is the next point. And as all education is for the ſake of what ſhall follow it, the truſtees for them ſhould intereſt themſelves not a little in their future courſe of life; and, ſo far as they can, ſecure their parents conſent when they are admitted, to their being placed out properly.

The profane or vicious, if any ſuch be allowed to take them, will eſteem them the leſs, not the more, for a conſiderable part of what they have learnt; and do nothing to preſerve the impreſſions of it, perhaps a great deal to efface them; and then will throw the whole blame of their ill behaviour on the management, under which they have been; and charge it with every thing, that their own imaginations can ſuggeſt. Good perſons therefore ſhould always be ſought out for them to go to. And they ſhould be earneſtly entreated, to keep them in the way into which they have been put; eſpecially to ſee, that they conſtantly attend on the Lord's days ſervice, and make a proper uſe of their religious books. For ſome ſuch ſhould always be given them at their leaving the ſchool, with a ſolemn charge concerning the main branches of their conduct.

But not only the perſons, with whom they are placed, but the employments, in which they are fixed, ſhould be well conſidered. Great numbers of them have been ſent to ſea; and it is not the fault of the truſtees, but of the parents, that more are not defending or enriching their country on board our ſhips. Of the reſt, thoſe who are bred in this town moſtly become either apprentices or houſhold ſervants; and, it ſeems, objections are made againſt each method of diſpoſing of them.

It hath been ſaid, that they are put to retailing ſhopkeepers, or other eaſy employments, unſuitable to their original condition; and that more money is required, and given with them, than with other children; all which, I am aſſured, is abſolutely falſe in fact. They are put, as they undoubtedly ought, to laborious working trades, and no other; with many of them, no money at all is given; with moſt of them, but forty ſhillings; with ſome few, five pounds; but more with

with none. And indeed it is evident, that the friends of ſuch an education will diſpoſe of them as cheap as they can; were it for this reaſon only, that they may take in as many as they can.

Another ſuggeſtion is, that they are put out to worthleſs perſons, in bad circumſtances, who take the money, and then break. But neither of this do I find any proof. However, though a groundleſs aſſertion, it may furniſh an uſeful warning.

But at leaſt, it is objected further, breeding ſo many of them to trades occaſions a ſcarcity of ſervants. Now even in this town, not two thirds of the boys, nor much above one fourth of the girls, have been put apprentices at all; and a great part of theſe were probably no other than houſhold ſervants, taken by indenture for a term of years. What the proportion hath been in the country, doth not appear; but in all likelihood it muſt have been very ſmall. Or were it otherwiſe, diſproportions of this nature will ſoon rectify themſelves. Where apprentices or journeymen are not wanted, and other ſervants are, theſe children will of courſe be ſent where the demand is greateſt; nor can the truſtees have either inclination or power to prevent it.

But whilſt one of the writers againſt our charity ſchools accuſes them of leſſening the number of ſervants *, the other charges them with increaſing it †. Poſſibly the meaning may be, that they increaſe the number of the upper and idler ſort, and leſſen that of the lower and more laborious. Now as to this; the boys, when they come from ſchool, are plainly incapable of the higher ſervices; nor are many of them taken, even for footmen. And yet, what plenty ſoever there is of livery ſervants, there is ſo loud a complaint of the want of ſober and honeſt ones, that I apprehend it would be no inconvenience, but a general advantage, if more of theſe children were put into that ſtation, in ſerious and regular families: for in others they would have little chance of doing good, and a great one of being ruined. Then for the girls, as they certainly ought not either to be raiſed into the eaſier places, or qualified for them; ſince it would hurt both others who have a better

* Eſſay, &c. p. 346. † CATO, p. 241.

a better claim to them, and the public; ſo I cannot find that they are; but that low buſineſs, with low wages of fifty ſhillings, or three pounds a year at moſt, is what univerſally falls to their ſhare, till, by a courſe of diligence and faithfulneſs, they can better their condition; which ſurely then ſhould not be envied them.

It hath been alleged indeed, that perſons are unwilling to take them for ſervants. But, as I know this to be very falſe in ſome places; ſo I hope, where it is true, it cannot be often on account of their education. Some may want ſervants of more ſtrength, than theſe young people can have at firſt; ſome may diſlike taking ſo unexperienced ones; ſome may think it beneath them, to have ſuch mean creatures in their houſes; and ſome may be unjuſtly prejudiced againſt them in other reſpects, partly by falſe repreſentations, and partly alſo by miſtaken appearances. For there is a ſuperficial pertneſs, very apt to ſpring up, at that time of life, amongſt numbers bred together; which ought to be, and I hope is, carefully kept under; and yet may now and then give a little offence. Beſides, all who are taught any thing valuable, are doubtleſs in ſome danger of eſteeming themſelves rather too highly upon it. But this can never be a reaſon, why they ſhould be taught nothing valuable. And ſuch trifling faults are ſo eaſily conquered in children, and will be ſo amply recompenſed by ſubſtantial good qualities, that prudent perſons will certainly think them worth trying at leaſt. They will find them taught to their hands thoſe good principles, which elſe they muſt think it their own duty to teach them, with no ſmall pains. And they will find them reſtrained, as much as they could be, from the vices, of which they would wiſh them not to be guilty, and in which others of their rank are too commonly indulged. Still not all, it muſt be owned, prove well, either under this ſort of management, or any other. Such as do, be they ever ſo many, have little or nothing ſaid of them; it is only what ought to be expected. Such as do not, occaſion abundance of talk; and all the errors, into which they run in ſpite of their education, are pretended to flow from it. But ſo far as inquiry hath hitherto been made, multitudes have proved excellently good; few in proportion remarkably bad; ſcarce any, perhaps none, have been convict-

ed of capital crimes, excepting thoſe who had been expelled as incurable. And if more particular inquiries were carried on in every ſchool, as they are in ſome, concerning the behaviour of each child, that hath been put out either to ſervice or apprenticeſhip; where they behave ill, it might give a good inſight into the cauſe, and ſhew how to remove it; but I am perſuaded, from what I have experienced, it would be generally found, that they behave well. To which perhaps it might add no deſpicable incitement, if ſome little reward were given to every one, who, at the end of ſo many years had deſerved a good character. And I am told, there is a legacy left to one ſchool, appropriated to this purpoſe.

But the chief objection with many perſons is, that this method of education takes off great numbers from huſbandry. And it muſt be allowed, that moſt of thoſe, who are bred up by charity in or near theſe two cities, are fixed in or near them afterwards. But is there the leaſt likelihood, that any of them would elſe have gone to country buſineſs? Do any of the other children of the poor go to it from hence? Did any of them before theſe ſchools were erected? None at all. The governors of one ſchool * have for ſome years advertiſed, that they were deſirous of ſending their children to huſbandry on very reaſonable terms; and had they met with encouragement, which they have not, others would have followed their example. The clergy have frequently in their ſermons exhorted to this way of diſpoſing of them. The more than once mentioned *ſociety* have adviſed it continually for a long time. And could any perſon ſuggeſt the means to ſo good an end, the truſtees have given public aſſurance, that they would rejoice in it moſt ſincerely. In the mean while, they do all that they have the power of doing: they place them in ſuch employments, as they muſt have followed otherwiſe, if they followed any. For indeed many of them would only have been brought up to beg or ſteal: few would have been employed ſo ſoon; ſcarce any ſo well. As to the children in country ſchools, their number is ſo ſmall, conſidering the extent through which they are diſperſed, that no general inconvenience could as yet be ſenſibly perceived from it, even though

* That of St. *Andrew's, Holborn.*

though a great part of them were put out improperly. But I apprehend they are not. They are none of them removed hither; nor apter than others, ſo far as I can hear, to come of their own accord. Where manufactures flouriſh, they are as uſeful in them, as they could be in any thing elſe; where there are none, or decaying ones only, they will go to huſbandry of courſe.

It is ſaid indeed, that hands are greatly wanted for country work. And at particular ſeaſons they are; but whether ſo very much upon the whole, as ſome think, may for ſeveral reaſons be doubted. The wages of country ſervants have certainly been much raiſed; but ſo have all wages, perhaps nearly in the ſame proportion. And as the quantity of our wealth, real or nominal, hath increaſed conſiderably within the laſt half century; the prices of the things, for which we exchange it, and of labour amongſt other things, muſt have increaſed by degrees, even had labourers of each kind been as numerous as ever; whereas probably they are much diminiſhed. But then the diminution proceeds, not from theſe ſchools, but from other cauſes of a very different nature *. Vaſt multitudes of men have been employed and loſt in our armies and fleets. Theſe two great cities are increaſed beyond meaſure, and exhauſt the reſt of the nation. The number of unneceſſary and uſeleſs ſervants is multiplied exceſſively; who corrupt one another here, and their poor neighbours when they go into the country, and teach them a fondneſs for the pleaſures and eaſe of the town. Hither therefore they flock; ſet up for ſuch places and ſuch wages as they like, and behave as they think fit; ſupport themſelves by combinations, when out of place, as long as they can; and at laſt will take any courſes, rather than wiſe ones. But indeed luxury and diſſoluteneſs are ſpread with irreligion through our people in general, from the higheſt to the loweſt: they muſt all both

* The author of the *Eſſay*, &c. ſeems to be ſenſible of this, when he ſays, p. 151, "A thouſand faults were to concur, before the inconvenlencies we labour "under could be produced, yet no man can doubt, but charity ſchools are ne-"ceſſary, or at leaſt more likely to increaſe than redreſs our complaints." This indeed is ſaying a great deal too much. But as others have ſaid much more, there is no queſtion but he would alſo; unleſs he had felt that he could not, conſiſtently with truth or modeſty.

ed of capital crimes, except predeceſſors in the ſame ſta-
as incurable. And if mo them, in wicked and expenſive
on in every ſchool, as matrimony; by this vice, and the
viour of each child. commonly joined with it, of drink-
or apprenticeſhip they enfeeble and deſtroy themſelves
good inſight in no increaſe. Theſe are the real cauſes of
I am perſuad do they owe their riſe to charity ſchools?
generally fe that in truth there is double occaſion for ſuch
it might r and country both, to preſerve, if it may be,
were g our poor from this dreadful plague, that rages ſo
had d amongſt them.
gacy

But it is objected in the laſt place; if this method of education hath ſo excellent a tendency, how comes it to paſs, that inſtead of that mighty reformation amongſt the common people, which the earlier ſermons on this occaſion promiſed from it, they are thus confeſſedly grown worſe under the uſe of it, than they were before? Now the anſwer is very eaſy. *No* proviſion of any ſort for the benefit of mankind ever did, or probably ever will, come up to the expectations and hopes, which good perſons, laudably zealous for it, were willing to entertain. Yet this doth not prove all ſuch proviſions to be uſeleſs or wrong. Beſides, it could not well be either foreſeen or ſuſpected, forty years ago, how entirely magiſtrates and heads of families would neglect the religion and morals of all under their care, and with what enthuſiaſtic vehemence others would ſet themſelves to extirpate ſerioufneſs and order out of the world. No wonder, if ſuch remiſſneſs and ſuch licentiouſneſs have done more harm, than charity ſchools have done good. The number educated in them, is a very ſmall part of the poor of the nation; and the wickedneſs of the reſt corrupts too many of theſe. Still the right principles, taught them, often preſerve them, and often bring them back, when nothing elſe would. And if this too frequently proves otherwiſe, it only ſhews the proneneſs of our nature to ſin, and the neceſſity of our beſt care. Had none been taken, bad as we are, we had been much worſe; and had more been taken, we might have been much better. But to charge the degeneracy of a people on the very thing, that doth ſo much to prevent it; and make it the reaſon of their being wicked, that ſome of them are trained up to be pious and virtuous, is a degree

which one ſcarce knows how to excuſe from
ntation.

proceed, as I am very ſenſible it is high time,
briefly, in the *third* place, What courſe we are to
neither prudent management, nor rational defences of
good work that we are engaged in, can altogether prevent
us *being evil ſpoken of*; which, though very hard, hath been hitherto, and we muſt expect will be, the caſe.

Some will ſpeak ill of it from hatred, others from indifference, to religion and virtue. For though, in reaſon, both unbelievers and immoral perſons ought to wiſh, that moſt others, eſpecially the poor, might be ſober and honeſt, and for that purpoſe religious, and therefore ought to encourage thoſe of them who are ſo, and ſuch methods as would make the reſt of them ſo, yet ſcripture * hath taught us to look for the contrary from them, and in experience we find it. They would even ſeem to act from a kind of principle in this matter: and perſons, who have no fear in the leaſt of ſociety being hurt by profaneneſs and profligateneſs, affect prodigious fears of its being hurt by charity ſchools; do nothing, ſay nothing, againſt other evils; join in them, plead for them; but this one danger awakens all their public ſpirit; and they are as clear, that the education of theſe poor children is the cauſe of almoſt every thing they diſlike, as the Heathen *Romans* were, that all the calamities which befel their empire, proceeded from the growth of Chriſtianity. Some again, without going ſo great lengths, will not fail, however, to condemn what they muſt elſe contribute to ſupport. Others are ſo unhappily attentive to party conſiderations or perſonal prejudices, that if a deſign, ever ſo valuable, comes from a wrong quarter, inſtead of being ambitious to ſhare in the merit and the honour of it, they ſet themſelves immediately to depreciate it, and ſuggeſt miſchievous intentions in it. And every one of theſe motives will induce ſome to invent, and many more to magnify faults; to dreſs out facts with circumſtances, that entirely alter the nature of them; and talk vehemently about things, which have been corrected long ago, as if they happened

* Amos v. 10. John xv. 19. xvii. 14. 1 John iii. 12.

pened lately, and the ſame ill management ſubſiſted ſtill. No perſons, indeed, ſhould be charged with ſpeaking or acting from worſe motives than they do; for it is both injuring and exaſperating them. But every perſon ought conſcientiouſly to examine what his own motives are, and prudently to conſider what thoſe of others may be; and neither be influenced by their opinions, nor their aſſertions, more than they deſerve. For not only falſe, but incredible and ridiculous ſtories about theſe ſchools, have been confidently averred, and incautiouſly believed.

Nor are bad people only, but very good ones ſometimes, grievouſly inclined to partialities and hard cenſures; too negligent of inquiring, too haſty in giving credit. A ſmall, or but imagined failure, in the ſcheme, in the execution, in the ſucceſs, of a moſt uſeful undertaking, ſhall cool their friendſhip, or provoke their enmity to it: and they ſtrangely forget, that a few errors and defects are no reaſon for abandoning valuable deſigns, but only for amending them; and that the good ariſing from them, even if amendments cannot be procured, may be vaſtly greater than the harm. It is very afflicting, when perſons, who mean well to religion, will notwithſtanding take part thus with ſuch as mean ill to it; and abet thoſe, who have no other view than to deſtroy, inſtead of favouring the endeavours that are uſed to reform and improve. The watchfulneſs of our worthy dioceſan over the management of this charity, hath kept equal pace with the malice of its forwardeſt adverſaries *. And your care, who are truſtees, hath been applied without intermiſſion, to prevent or remedy what others have only buſied themſelves to rail at. Yet the faithful diligence ſhewn on the one ſide, hath been ſuſpected and reproached; and the unrighteous accuſations brought on the other, applauded and propagated.

But unjuſt as this treatment is, you muſt reſolve to bear it with all poſſible temper and compoſedneſs. For perſons, who judge and behave very wrong in relation to theſe ſchools, may yet be entitled to great regard on other accounts. And where prejudice

* See the *directions* given by the Lord Biſhop of *London* to the maſters and miſtreſſes of charity ſchools, in the Chapter-Houſe of St. *Paul's*, *Nov.* 14. 1714.

prejudice and a kind of faſhion run againſt any thing, as they do amongſt too many in the preſent caſe, angry complaints, however well grounded, will only be deſpiſed, or excite a return of more anger; whereas mild repreſentations will at leaſt mollify thoſe whom they cannot bring over. Objections therefore, and even invectives, ſhould be patiently heard; and anſwers, though ſufficiently given already, repeated with calmneſs. If real faults are found, they ſhould be acknowledged; if proper alterations are demanded, they ſhould be made. For though innovations, which appear very plauſible, may be found, when examined, very dangerous, and therefore love of change is by no means to be encouraged, yet averſion to it may be carried to an extreme alſo; and perſons may both intend very well, and in moſt things do very well, and yet material points may have been either overlooked by them at firſt, or gradually forgotten afterwards. Each of you ſingly, therefore, ſhould always be ſolicitous to learn, both from friends and enemies, what will be conducive to your deſign; and that excellent rule, which you have ſo wiſely eſtabliſhed and ſo long obſerved, of ſtated meetings to conſult together for the better conduct of it, ſhould be ſtrictly kept up, and diligently applied, to propoſe modeſtly, and promote unanimouſly, whatever may contribute either to perfect or recommend it. Only you will remember, that the former ſhould be your chief concern; and that the reality, not the name, of a Chriſtian and uſeful education, is the thing which you are to have at heart.

Such then is your duty: and if you are conſcious of having taken due pains to perform it, let who will cenſure or ridicule you, let who will grow cool or leave you, go on with cheerfulneſs, and perſevere to the end. For, provided it be *a zeal according to knowledge* *, *it is good to be always zealouſly affected in a good thing* †; and not to ſuffer our *love to wax cold, becauſe iniquity abounds* ‡. Deſerting ſuch a work, after once engaging in it, not only withdraws countenance from it, but caſts an imputation upon it. *Be not*, therefore, *overcome of evil, but*, in this ſenſe as well as others, *overcome evil*

* Rom. x. 2. † Gal. iv. 18. ‡ Matth. xxiv. 12.

evil with good *. You have the comfort of doing much ſervice to God and your fellow-creatures; you have the conſciouſneſs of having endeavoured to do more. You deſerve from all perſons, and you will receive from all conſiderate perſons, great honour: and were it leſs, you would only be the ſurer, that you act from a right principle, and ſhall obtain a large reward; not only for all you have deſigned, but all you have borne, as you ought; whether it be reproach, or whether it be diſappointment. But then let your whole lives be ſuitable to this part: be good Chriſtians in every reſpect yourſelves, whilſt you profeſs to make others ſuch; elſe you will diſcredit your undertaking before men, and loſe your recompence from God. For though *charity ſhall cover the multitude of ſins* †, yet this one work is only a ſmall branch of that extenſive virtue; and were it the whole, no wilful tranſgreſſions, of which you do not ſo repent as to forſake them, ſhall ever be hid by it.

But all that the directors of this charity can do, will be much in vain, unleſs you, the maſters and miſtreſſes of the ſeveral ſchools, perform your ſhare as you ought, in every particular, which you can either ſuggeſt to yourſelves, or learn from others; unleſs you go through your whole work with diligence and diſcretion, with patience and vigilance, with impartiality and diſintereſtedneſs, with deference and reſpect to thoſe who employ you, with authority and yet mildneſs towards thoſe over whom you are placed, with a tender concern for their temporal and eternal happineſs, and a fearleſs reſolution to oppoſe and overcome every hindrance to either. The beſt deſigns, without a ſuitable execution of them, are likely to end in nothing, or worſe. Think then with yourſelves: will you occaſion all this charity, and all theſe objects of it, to be utterly loſt by your fault? Or will you be the authors of more good to them, and more bleſſedneſs to your own ſouls, than any perſons of your degree poſſibly can in any other way? By your endeavours and your prayers you have the latter in your power; and God incline your hearts to it! The impreſſions that can be made from this

* Rom. xii. 21. † 1 Pet. iv. 8.

this place at preſent on your poor children, can be but ſmall, or at beſt ſhort-lived. To you, therefore, I leave it, to give them the deepeſt ſenſe that you are able, of the unſpeakable privilege of their education, the dreadful guilt of making a bad uſe of it, the indiſpenſable duty of doing juſtice and credit every way to the ſchools to which they belong; and of recompenſing hereafter, as God ſhall enable them, the benefit which they receive.

But I muſt not even yet conclude, till I have in one word more reminded you all, who are here aſſembled, that without continual help this excellent undertaking cannot be ſupported; and that almoſt every one is capable of giving it help, more or leſs, in ſome way or another. They who have the burden of conducting it as truſtees, all afford it the aſſiſtance of their purſes, as well as their pains and advice. And I hope ſuch of you as are proper will be ready, when occaſion ſhall require, to ſhare in the ſame truſt. For nothing is more abſolutely neceſſary to ſuch a charity, than a conſtant ſucceſſion of wiſe, and good, and reputable managers. But if you cannot ſerve it this way, ſerve it, however, in the much eaſier way, of a cheerful liberality. Its being a *good* thing *evil ſpoken of*, obliges you, who are convinced it is unjuſtly ſo ſpoken of, both to patroniſe it more earneſtly, and contribute to it more bountifully. The trueſt objects of compaſſion upon earth, are young perſons left, uninſtructed and unreſtrained, to the dangers of a corrupted nature and a vicious world. And ſuch, without the timely interpoſition of a Chriſtian ſpirit, would theſe have been, whoſe appearance now not only gives your eyes the pleaſure of a beautiful and affecting ſpectacle, but your hearts the joy of beholding at once ſo many thouſands of young candidates for uſefulneſs in this world, and endleſs felicity in the next, as perhaps no nation under the ſun beſides hath ever ſeen together. Let us comfort ourſelves in the proſpect, and oppoſe it to the very gloomy ones that we have around us. Amongſt the poor our religion firſt had its riſe; and there at leaſt it may yet maintain its ground, till it *ſhall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward**, amongſt other ranks of men. We are following the original

* Iſa. xxxvii. 31.

plan of the divine wiſdom, in making proviſion for revealing *thoſe things to babes*, which *the wiſe and prudent* in their own eyes have *hid from* themſelves *. And may God, *out of the mouths of* theſe *babes and ſucklings* †, *ordain and perfect praiſe* to his holy name, and *ſtrength* to the kingdom of his ever-bleſſed Son!

* Matth. xi. 25. † Pſal. viii. 2. Matth. xxi. 16.

SERMON CXXXIII.

(Preached in the Parish-Church of St. *James*, *Westminster*, *March* 11. 1749-50, on Occasion of the Earthquake, *March* 8.)

On the Reverence Due to Divine Providence, on Occasion of Striking Calamities to Nations or Cities.

Psalm ii. 11.

Serve the Lord with fear; and rejoice unto him with reverence.

THE passion of fear is an extremely necessary one for all creatures, whose good or evil depends on their behaviour: for it prompts them instantly to avoid whatever would harm them; and accordingly God hath given it a strong and deep root in human nature. But as our frame is disordered throughout, we are liable, in this respect, as well as many more, now to exceed, now to be deficient; and fearing too little, on some occasions, is the cause of our fearing, on others, much more than else we should need. Religion, if we permit it, will regulate all our inward feelings to our present and eternal advantage; and is particularly serviceable, not only in exciting, but directing and moderating this. Without religion, there may be endless alarms. Were not the world governed by infinite justice and goodness, every person that would, might, in multitudes of cases, do any hurt to others with impunity; and all mischief of all kinds befal us, however innocent, singly or jointly, through the whole course of life, unalleviated

by a proſpect of recompence after death. Nay, indeed, as nothing hinders, but that, if it were poſſible for us to exiſt without God here, it might be poſſible hereafter too, there could be no certainty that death itſelf would end our ſufferings, or even would not increaſe them. But the knowledge of a gracious and wiſe Providence entirely ſecures us, if we believe it as we ought, not only againſt all imaginations of inexorable fate and blind chance, but all real detriment from the worſt efforts of men or devils. For *if God be for us, who can be againſt us**? It is very true, religion baniſhes theſe objects of apprehenſion, by ſubſtituting in their room another, unſpeakably more formidable than them all. *I ſay unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you ſhall fear. Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into hell: yea, I ſay unto you, Fear him* †. And did not reaſon afford us hope, and ſcripture aſſurance, of his accepting and rewarding us, on moſt equitable terms, our condition under the divine government would be ſurrounded with incomparably greater terrors than any other poſſibly could. But ſince we know the means of obtaining his favour, in this life and the next, if we will but uſe them conſcientiouſly, the awe, which we cannot but feel, of an Almighty arm, will be ſweetly mixed with faithful love; and thoſe things, which give others the moſt grievous diſturbance, will not need to give us the leaſt. *Fear ye not their fear, neither be afraid: but ſanctify the Lord of hoſts, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he ſhall be a ſanctuary* ‡. Firſt, therefore, learn to *ſerve the Lord with fear*, and then you will be entitled to *rejoice unto him with reverence*.

The word of God, far from encouraging groundleſs and ſuperſtitious horrors, cautions againſt them ſtrongly. In all ages and nations, men have been terrified with eclipſes of the ſun and moon; in many, with conjunctions, oppoſitions and aſpects of the ſtars, and other celeſtial appearances; things altogether harmleſs. Therefore ſuch frights the prophet expreſsly condemns. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Learn not the way*

of

* Rom. viii. 31. † Luke xii. 4, 5. ‡ Iſ. viii. 12, 13, 14.

of the Heathen, and be not diſmayed at the ſigns of heaven, becauſe the Heathen are diſmayed at them: for the cuſtoms of the people are vain *. But whatſoever things are real inſtruments of our Maker's will, we are to conſider as ſuch; and reſpect all that is wrought by them, as proceeding from his appointment. Were we ſure of living ever ſo long on earth; we are abſolutely in his hands all the time we live; and ought to be deeply ſenſible, that our happineſs or miſery, even here, depends continually upon him. But he hath paſſed a ſentence of death on us all, to be executed, at furtheſt in a few years; and this furniſhes a new motive to ſerioufneſs of heart, which we ſhould be recollecting daily and hourly. But inſtead of that, we contrive all poſſible means never to think of it; and we ſucceed too well. Therefore to awaken us from this lethargy, he hath ordained beſides, that the whole of life ſhall be full of diſeaſes and accidents, to cut it ſhort on a ſudden, often when there was leaſt cauſe to expect them; and here is a more preſſing call to *conſider our latter end* †. But however ſurpriſing each of theſe may be, when it happens very near us: yet, as one or another of them happens pretty frequently; for that very reaſon, though they ought to affect us the more, they ſcarce affect us at all. Therefore he alſo brings on, from time to time, the leſs common, and more widely deſtructive events, of wars and peſtilences. Of the former we have for ſeveral years, not long paſt, had heavy experience. And what we ſee and hear to this day of the latter amongſt our cattle, tells us, one ſhould think, in a very intereſting manner, to what we are ſubject ourſelves. But if all theſe things fail of the good effects, which he propoſes by them, as it is notorious they do with us moſt lamentably: he hath in reſerve more alarming methods of admonition ſtill: one in particular, by which he ſhakes whole cities, whole countries and nations, ſometimes to the extent of many hundred leagues at once, notwithſtanding the intervention of large and deep ſeas; and hath frequently taken away the lives of thouſands in a moment, by a ruin, which no wiſdom can foreſee, no caution prevent, no ſtrength withſtand, no art evade.

You

* Jer. x. 2, 3. † Deut. xxxii. 29.

You have often read and heard of ſuch threatenings and devaſtations elſewhere; but did not look on them, as having the leaſt relation to yourſelves. Poſſibly ſome of you imagined, that this part of the world was exempt from them. But indeed your anceſtors have felt them many times recorded in hiſtory, probably many more. However, that, you may think, was long ago; and would be long enough, before it happened again. Yet not a few perſons, now alive, remember one earthquake in this city; and that you may not dream of being ſafer than they, Providence hath taken care, that you ſhall feel another. Still, when you had eſcaped one ſhock, perhaps you thought the danger was over. Therefore you have felt a ſtronger. And which of you can be ſure, that this will prove the laſt?

But you will ſay, Neither theſe nor the former have done any harm; and therefore why ſhould we fear it from future ones? But let me tell you, earthquakes have done harm in this kingdom, in this town; overturned many private houſes, many churches, not without the loſs of many lives. But if that were otherwiſe, have we any reaſon to doubt, but the cauſes of earthquakes are the ſame here as in other places? Why then may not the effects be the ſame in our days, though formerly they have been leſs? Who can look into the bowels of the earth and aſſign a reaſon? Place the cauſe, if you will, contrary, I think, to plain evidence, not in the earth, but the air, what will you gain by it? Would not a very little more force, nay a few moments longer continuance of the ſame force, that ſhook our houſes the other morning, have buried many or moſt of us under them, whenceſoever it came? And if it had, let us aſk ourſelves, were we in due readineſs to have appeared before God?

No longer than fifty-ſeven years ago, when the laſt earthquake before theſe was felt here; within a few months of the ſame time, near 2000 perſons were deſtroyed in a moment by one at *Jamaica*; and near 100,000 by another in *Sicily*. Not three years and a half ago, in *Lima*, the principal city of *Peru*, containing 60,000 inhabitants, 5,000 periſhed by an earthquake in leſs than three minutes, and but twenty-five houſes were left ſtanding. At the ſea port of *Callao*, belonging to it, not one building, nor one ſhip eſcaped, and only 100 inhabitants

tants out of 7,000: nor were there fewer, than ſixty ſhocks more, in thirty days. Indeed at the ſame place, they return generally about once a month, and with great violence once in a few years. Ought the conſideration of theſe things to have no effect upon us? Allowing them not to prove, that we ever ſhall be in ſo dreadful a ſituation; yet they prove, that, for aught we know, we may; they ſhew, in a ſtrong light, the terrors of divine power; and ſhould remind us of all the other reaſons, that we have, to ſtand in awe of it, both in this world and a future one; of which we ought to think without ſuch warnings; but if we can be thoughtleſs in the midſt of them, we are void of all excuſe. By taking pains for it, we may bring ourſelves to imagine the ſufferings of others, no concern of ours; and our own danger, a very ſlight one. But do we reſolve then, that nothing ſhall move us, but what will deſtroy us? That we will not repent, unleſs we are attacked by a judgment, that will leave multitudes of us no time to repent? You have, in the revelation of St. *John*, this prophetic deſcription: *And the ſame hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and in the earthquake were ſlain of men, ſeven thouſand; and the remant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven* *. Had it not been much better, that all ſhould have been preſerved, by giving glory to God in time? And who can be certain, in ſuch a caſe, that he may not be one amongſt thoſe, who periſh, however few?

But ſuppoſe we could be aſſured, that this land of ours would for ever be exempted from the ſevere viſitations, which ſo many others have long undergone, do ſtill, and are likely to undergo, who hath exempted us? *Who hath made us to differ* †? Do we owe him nothing on that account; that *the lot is fallen unto us in ſo fair a ground*, that *we have ſo goodly a heritage* ‡? And ought ſuch mild admonitions from God, as we have lately received, of what he could do, and doth not, to paſs by us unregarded? Do we *deſpiſe the riches of his goodneſs and forbearance*, inſtead of *knowing, that it leads us to repentance* §? The countries that ſuffer moſt, have no right to

* Rev. xi. 13.
† 1 Cor. iv. 7.
‡ Pſ. xvi. 7.
§ Rom. ii. 4.

to complain. He hath doubtleſs wiſe, though unſearchable reaſons, for ſubjecting them to the calamities, from which he hath preſerved others; and he will ſufficiently diſtinguiſh hereafter the good and the bad, whom at any time he involves in a common calamity here. Yet ſurely we are glad, every one of us, that we are not in their condition; and whatever we have cauſe to be glad of, we have cauſe to be thankful for it, to the author of all good.

But perhaps you will ſay: "Theſe things are natural; "and therefore what foundation is there for conſidering them "in a religious light?" But ſuppoſing they are, which is more than we know, is not the whole frame of things, of our bodies and our ſouls, natural? And are we therefore to conſider none of them in a religious light, we are to conſider, them all ſo. Life and death are natural. Judgment, heaven and hell, are juſt as natural. For what is nature? The order eſtabliſhed by a wiſe and holy God. And muſt he not deſign, that we ſhould learn from every part of it, eſpecially the moſt ſtriking parts, to honour him, and *fear before the Lord**? He foreſaw from the beginning, that conſtant and uniform impreſſions on our minds would be apt to grow faint and languid. Therefore he interwove, in his original ſcheme, incidents that ſhould alarm us from time to time. Is that proviſion of his a reaſon, why we ſhould not be alarmed?

Terror alone indeed is of no uſe. And God forbid, that I ſhould endeavour to raiſe it in any of you, were nothing better likely to follow. But generally ſpeaking, it is the firſt, the ſtrongeſt motive to reformation. And though dread of future puniſhments ought to have, that of preſent often hath, the moſt powerful influence in exciting ſentiments of piety, and thence of virtue; which are both of them practiſed afterwards from more ingenuous principles. *With my ſoul have I deſired thee in the night; yea, with my ſpirit within me will I ſeek thee early. For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs*†. And this particular judgment, of which we have had, in compariſon, ſo gentle an intimation, appears from ſcripture to have been peculiarly intended and employed, through ſucceſſive generations,

* Haggai, i. 12. † Iſ. xxvi. 9.

tions, to give mankind a ſenſe of reverence and duty towards him, *who removeth the mountains*, and *overturneth them in his anger; who ſhaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble* *. When the law was delivered at mount *Sinai*, *the whole mountain*, we read, *quaked greatly* †. When *Corah* and his company rebelled againſt the Lord; *the ground that was under them clave aſunder, the earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed them up: they went down alive into the pit; and the earth cloſed upon them, and they periſhed from among the congregation* ‡. In the day of *Saul*, when the Lord avenged *Iſrael* of the Philiſtines, *there was a trembling in the field; and the earth quaked; it was a trembling of God* §. When he delivered *David* from the hand of his enemies, *the very foundations of the hills ſhook and were removed, becauſe he was wroth* ‖. When his own people provoked him to diſpleaſure, his threatening in *Iſaiah* is: *Thou ſhalt be viſited of the Lord of hoſts with thunder, and with earthquakes, and great noiſe, with ſtorm and tempeſt* ¶. Sometimes indeed expreſſions, like theſe, may ſignify only diſorders and commotions in kingdoms and ſtates, ſuch as we experienced not many years ago, and had reaſon to pray with the pſalmiſt: *O God, thou haſt caſt us off, thou haſt ſcattered us, thou haſt been diſpleaſed: O turn thyſelf to us again. Thou haſt made the earth to tremble: heal the breaches thereof, for it ſhaketh* **. But there was in *Iſaiah*'s age a literal earthquake, ſo conſiderable, that we find it ſerved afterwards, both for a date, to mark times ††, and, even at the diſtance of two hundred years, for a proverbial deſcription of terror: *Ye ſhall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah* ‡‡. Again, *Jeremiah* ſets forth the wickedneſs of the *Jewiſh* nation, too like our own, and its conſequences, thus: *My people is fooliſh, they have not known me: they are wiſe to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled; and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man: the fruitful place was a wilderneſs, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the pre-*

* Job. ix. 5, 6. † Exod. xix. 18. ‡ Numb. xvi. 31, 32, 33.
§ 1 Sam. xiv. 15. ‖ Pſ. xviii. 7. ¶ Iſ. xxix. 6.
** Pſ. lx. 1, 2. †† Amos i. 1. ‡‡ Zech. xiv. 5.

ſence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger *. Once more, God is introduced in the prophet *Ezekiel*, uſing theſe words: *In my jealouſy, and the fire of my wrath, have I ſpoken: ſurely in that day there ſhall be a great ſhaking in the land of Iſrael; ſo that the fiſhes of the ſea, the fowls of the heaven, and the beaſts of the field, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, ſhall ſhake at my preſence; and the mountains ſhall be thrown down, and the ſteep places fall, and every wall ſhall fall to the ground: thus will I magnify myſelf in the eyes of many nations; and they ſhall know, that I am the Lord* †.

Nor doth the Old Teſtament only give us theſe awful ideas; but in the New, no leſs than three of the four evangeliſts record our Saviour to have foretold, that, before his coming to judgment, *Nation ſhall riſe againſt nation, and kingdom againſt kingdom, and great earthquakes ſhall be in divers places, and famines and peſtilences; and fearful ſights and great ſigns ſhall there be from heaven: all theſe are the beginning of ſorrows* ‡. Now moſt of theſe, it muſt be owned, we have ſeen and felt. Yet I am far from concluding, and would counſel others not to be raſh in concluding any thing in relation to *the times and ſeaſons, which the Father hath put in his own power* §. But we are authoriſed to conclude, that ſuch viſitations may be tokens of wonderful changes, in the natural, in the civil world; as indeed the book of *Revelation* affords a ground to believe, that, ſooner or later, they will: deſcribing many grand periods of time, as introduced by theſe fore-runners. Or however that be, we cannot err in concluding, that a *God ſo great in counſel and mighty in work*, muſt have *his eyes open on all the ways of the ſons of men, to give every one according to the fruit of his doings* ‖. Whether at the preſent time, whether in the preſent life, appears not yet. And I would not terrify the worſt ſinner among you beyond reaſon. Poſſibly we may feel no more of theſe ſhocks. Poſſibly no damage may attend them if we do. But is poſſibility, is probability, in a matter ſo totally out of ſight, firm ground enough for you to riſk your ſouls upon? Even were it certainty, hath

* Jer. iv. 22—26. † Ezek. xxxviii. 19, 20, 23.
‡ Math. xxiv. 7, 8. Mark xiii. 8. Luke xxi. 11.
§ Acts i. 7. ‖ Jer. xxxii. 19.

hath God no other means, than earthquakes, to deal with men as they deſerve? Or is not every part of the creation ready to execute his vengeance, whenever he bids it. Surely then you ſhould have immediate recourſe to the ſcripture remedy, the only infallible one, againſt this and all dangers, *ſtand in awe, and ſin not* *.

But perhaps you will object; "We are not convinced that "our danger, be there ever ſo much, proceeds from ſin. "We are not greater ſinners than others; they that ſuffer "moſt by ſudden ſtrokes, are not greater; our Saviour hath "told us, that they are not †." But he ſaid it of ſome only, not of all; and to what end did he ſay it of thoſe? To make men thoughtleſs and careleſs about themſelves? No; entirely to make them charitable in their judgments about their brethren. On what foundation then do we of this nation, this city, ſay, we are not worſe than others? I am ſenſible, the countries around us are very wicked. And it might be as fruitleſs, as it would be a melancholy employment, to examine, which are worſe, we or they. Yet ſurely our luxury and extravagance, our debauchery and intemperance, our madneſs for pleaſure from the higheſt to the loweſt, our ſelfiſhneſs and profligate corruption, our uncharitable diviſions, alas! our many other ſins that might be named, are not eaſily parallelled any where elſe. But ſuppoſing them to equal us in this horrid competition; do they ſin as openly, as avowedly as we, *glorying in their ſhame* ‡? Are they unpuniſhed, unreſtrained, I had almoſt ſaid indulged, as here? I conceive not. Or if they were as boldly and ſecurely vicious in common life; are they as regardleſs too of him that made them? I believe no one nation in the Chriſtian world is, or ever was. Many individuals may; but is the generality, the bulk of high and low, ſo profane any where; ſo contemptuouſly negligent of God, and, in conſequence of that, ſo utterly deſtitute of all proſpect and all principle of amendment? Or admitting even this; yet, in many other nations, ill-grounded, ſuperſtitious, unworthy opinions make up a conſiderable part of their religious belief; on which account, it is more excuſable, if ſome are tempted to deſpiſe the whole; while others

* Pſ. iv. 4. † Luke xiii. 2, &c. ‡ Phil. iii. 19.

rely on empty forms, or impious obſervances, even to appeaſe God on ſuch occaſions, as the preſent. But you have a rational and moral religion, with plain inſtructions in it, and home exhortations to live ſuitably to it, preſſed upon you continually; and you *love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe your deeds are evil* *. Nay, more than a few, not content to diſobey it, ridicule it, inveigh againſt it, teach others to do ſo too; ſome, in mere wanton gaiety; others, with a zeal quite enthuſiaſtic. And for what end? Have they a ſyſtem of doctrines and precepts to ſet up, more honourable to the Supreme Being, more beneficial to human ſociety, better fitted to enlighten the underſtanding, to dignify the heart? And is it to eſtabliſh this, that they depreciate Chriſtianity? No; however highly and extravagantly ſome of them, now and then, affect to talk of natural religion; yet in fact, none of them, ſo far as appears, either practiſe or ſtatedly profeſs it; but they live *without God, and* die without *hope* †. Nor have we only our means of knowledge, but our liberty, our plenty, our numberleſs mercies of every kind, to aggravate our tranſgreſſions. And ſtill can we plead, that we are no worſe than others? Or if we could, what comfort is there in that, if we are bad enough to deſerve God's indignation; and growing yearly and daily to deſerve a higher degree of it; abounding more and more in our old vices, and adding new and unnatural ones to them? Doth our Saviour ſay, that ſuch, as can flatter themſelves, they are not greater ſinners than others, need not be afraid? Quite the contrary, he ſaith, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh* ‡. And, I beg you obſerve, the general terror of that ſaying hath now been particularly pointed towards this city, the head-quarters and example of wickedneſs to the whole iſland. This very place hath been the centre, both of the firſt and the ſecond ſhock; and they have extended but few miles round it. Doth not that look very like an eſpecial denunciation againſt us? And ſhould it not incline us to take the prophet's direction: *The voice of the Lord crieth unto the city; and the man of wiſdom ſhall ſee thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it* §.

Some,

* John iv. 19. † Eph. ii. 12. ‡ Luke xiii. 3. § Mic. vi. 9.

Some, I am told, have reſolved to fly away from hence upon it, and then imagine they ſhall be out of all hazard. But do you hope to fly from God? Fly from your iniquities to God, if you would be ſafe. Other precautions will avail you little. You had one alarm a month ago. Have you left off a ſin or a folly ſince, done a deed of charity, or made a hearty prayer the more for it? The public appearance of things, I am ſure, hath been almoſt in all reſpects the ſame; and in very many ſuch as it ought by no means to be. You have now had a ſecond and more terrifying admonition. Hath even that brought you to any determinate good reſolutions? If not, what do you think will? And what muſt become of you, if nothing do? Miſtake me not to mean, that this one fright ſhould have more effect upon you ſingly, than all the ſtanding motives to reformation put together. But ſtill, when it hath peculiarly awakened you, and revived the impreſſions of them all on your minds, if you ſuffer them to wear out again, and relapſe into your former inconſiderateneſs, you will be too likely to ſleep on, till your final ruin overtakes you. This warning was deſigned for a ſignal mercy to you. If you ſlight it, what can you expect, but to be left for the future to the hardneſs of your own hearts? Even ſhould more of the ſame kind follow, it is moſt likely that you will grow accuſtomed to them; and like thouſands of poor wretches abroad, purſue your ſins fearleſsly, with all the elements, in their turn, threatening from time to time immediate perdition to you.

But, it may be, more than a few of you have felt no ſmall convictions for ſome days paſt; only you dare not expreſs them, either in words or behaviour, becauſe the reſt of the world would deſpiſe you. Yet perhaps, all the while, many of them are under juſt the ſame difficulty. You are afraid of their contempt, they are afraid of yours; and would you, on both ſides, diſcover your ſentiments, you would ſupport one another in what is right, inſtead of awing one another into what is wrong. But were you to ſtand ſingle; are you to ſtifle and bely your fear of God for fear of man? Remember what our Lord and Maſter hath declared to thoſe who *are aſhamed of him and his words, in a ſinful and adulterous generation.*

generation *. Very probably, in the days of *Noah*, in thoſe before the overthrow of *Sodom*, there were perſons diſturbed not a little within, at the lives they led, and the threatenings they heard; but ſtill, they knew not how to do otherwiſe than all around them did. So they went on with the crowd: *they eat, they drank, they planted, they builded, they bought, they ſold, they married, they were given in marriage; and knew not, till the flood came, and took them away;* till *it rained fire and brimſtone from heaven, and deſtroyed them all* †.

But you will ſay, "Are we then, at ſuch times as theſe, "to lay aſide the common buſineſs and offices of life?" On no account. Lay them aſide always on this day, as much as you can: but on others, it is not following them, it is not attending to them diligently, the far greateſt part of your time; but attending to them ſo as to neglect or break through higher obligations, that is the ſin. The proper employments of each perſons ſtation are duties to which God hath called him: but they are to be done from an inward principle of ſubmiſſion to his will, with a juſt ſenſe of the vanity of this world, of the importance of the next, and with a ſerious care, *ſo to paſs through things temporal, that we finally loſe not the things eternal* ‡.

"But if buſineſs be allowable, are not diverſions too?" With what intent do you aſk this? Is it not indeed, that you may exclaim againſt your teachers, it may be your religion alſo, as unreaſonably rigid, if we anſwer one way; and pretend, that we approve of your going on juſt as you do, if we anſwer the other way? Come with a better meaning, and aſk, and you ſhall have ſatisfaction. But you may have it now. We dare not take upon us to ſay, that all amuſements are unlawful, to all perſons, at all times. We believe they are often innocent, ſometimes uſeful and requiſite. But we muſt ſay, and would to God the people of this land would hear us, for they have great need; that living to them, and doating on them, in the manner now commonly practiſed, is a heinous, crying, pernicious ſin. Fortunes are impaired and ruined; creditors poſtponed and defrauded; healths worn out, and

* Mark viii. 38. † Matth. xxiv. 38, 39. Luke xvii. 27, 28, 29.
‡ Collect, 4th Sunday after Trinity.

and lives thrown away; children taught nothing that they ought, and initiated early into every thing that they ought not; family, private, public affairs, diſregarded; modeſty undermined, and common honeſty put to trials, which often get the better of it; and all by the means of ſuch a mad purſuit of pleaſure and entertainment of every kind, real or imaginary, through almoſt every waking hour, as was formerly unknown here, but hath been of late years continually increaſing; and is, if there be poſſible room for it, increaſing ſtill, and ſpreading wider, amongſt all ranks of people, in defiance to religion, to reaſon, to law: even they who make the laws, they who ſhould execute them, they who ſhould ſee that their inferiors execute them, joining openly in the violation of them, and ſo inviting all around them to do the ſame.

But could all theſe miſchiefs be avoided in ſuch a courſe of life; yet is it nothing, that your time, your thoughts, your ſouls are filled with trifles and follies; that you are engaged in them too late over night, to attend here the next morning on the worſhip and inſtruction which your Maker hath appointed; that ſuch multitudes, inſtead of ſo important a work, ſpend the former part of this holy day in needleſs viſitings and airings, idle excurſions and parties; and not a few, the latter part in debauchery or gaming; that you lay aſide, it may be feared entirely, the moſt improving duties of ſelf-inſpection and private prayer; forget God, and give yourſelves up to the world; that you cling to theſe vanities, even at the age when they become you the worſt, till you drop into eternity, with your heads and your hearts full of nothing elſe; and yet, on the merit of this wiſe conduct, apprehend yourſelves entitled to ſcorn, inſtead of honouring, thoſe who act on other principles?

If you cannot uſe diverſions, without running into ſuch lengths, indeed without danger of coming in ſight of them, you are bound, as you value your ſalvation, not to uſe them at all. And though you can uſe them ever ſo ſafely, it will both be pious, prudent and charitable, to abſtain from all of them often, and from ſome of them perhaps altogether; were it only to guard others, to whom they may be leſs ſafe; and to ſhew the world, what it ſeems to have no remaining notion of, that life may be ſupported, may be enjoyed, without them.

The preſent ſeaſon of Lent uſed to be a teſtimony of this: but of late all methods have been employed to make it a teſtimony of the contrary; by crowding into it, and even into the moſt ſacred week of it, as many entertainments, both in private houſes and public theatres, as can be contrived. If theſe things are wrong, why may not you take the preſent opportunity, when you have had ſo loud a call to ſerioufneſs, for beginning to practiſe a little more of it than ordinary; and, for that purpoſe, keep back from ſome places, to which elſe you might have gone? Let others gueſs the reaſon. If they aſk, let them know it. If they deride you, either enter upon the ſubject, or avoid it, as you ſee a likelihood, or none, of doing good; but at leaſt keep to your point, with temper, with charity, yet with reſolution.

"But if we act thus, all the world will ſhun us; we ſhall "be left alone: what ſhall we do?" The more valuable part of the world will not ſhun you; and the loſs of ſome of your company may be very far from doing harm. It is likely you will have a good deal more time to yourſelves; but can you not find, have you not already, full employment for it? Diſcreet conduct of your own affairs, kind aſſiſtance of others, needful care of your health, proper improvement of your mind in uſeful knowledge, theſe things may ſurely fill up no ſmall part of your day. But there is another work, the moſt neceſſary of all, the *one thing needful** ; to which, perhaps, you have not applied, near ſo much as it requires, near ſo much as you imagine; I mean a ſerious practical attention to your ſpiritual ſtate. Surely you muſt be ſenſible, that the buſineſs of a Chriſtian is, not only to abſtain from groſs wickedneſs, and obſerve the forms of piety, but to mortify that *love of the world* and of pleaſure, which is inconſiſtent with *the love of the Father*†; and *ſet our affections on things above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God*‡; to cultivate and exerciſe equity, mildneſs and charity towards all men; and perform, from a right principle, every duty of every ſocial relation; yet to know, that after all *we are unprofitable ſervants* §; and muſt rely, not on our own righteouſneſs, but the mercy of the goſpel. Great numbers amongſt you

* Luke x. 42. † 1 John ii. 15. ‡ Col. iii. 1, 2. § Luke xvii. 10.

you doubtleſs are, and may long, perhaps always, have been, what common language calls moral, and even religious perſons; but are you what an awakened conſcience, what the *ſcripture of truth* *, calls ſo? Compare that, and the directions which wiſe and good men have drawn out of it for your uſe, with your paſt actions, words, and thoughts. Examine both well, without frightening yourſelves unreaſonably, or accuſing yourſelves unjuſtly, but without flattering yourſelves at all; remembering that God is merciful, but remembering alſo that he is holy. This alone may prove no ſhort taſk. And if the inquiry end on the whole in your favour, as God grant it may, frequent reflections, that your Maker is your friend, and heaven your inheritance, will enable you to paſs your future days very joyfully, how little ſoever may be contributed of ſuperficial happineſs from any other quarter. But at the beſt, you will aſſuredly perceive at the ſame time, what will give you ſtill further occupation, many things in yourſelves to beg forgiveneſs for, to amend, to watch over. And ſhould you find, as I fear too many of you will, that *your heart* as yet *is not right in the ſight of God; that you are* ſtill *in the gall of bitterneſs and the bond of iniquity* †; here will be work enough for you to do, though every thing unneceſſary be left undone; to humble yourſelves before him with deep contrition; to lay hold on his offered mercy, with true faith in the merits of his Son; to pray for his grace, and uſe it; to *cleanſe yourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit* ‡. Never aſk what you ſhall do with your ſpare time, till you have gone through theſe things. And when you have, if the late providential warning hath been, in the leaſt degree, the occaſion of your undertaking them, you will bleſs God to your dying day for the alarm which it gave you.

Amidſt the innumerable and ineſtimable privileges belonging to thoſe who have *acquainted themſelves with him, and are at peace* §, one, peculiarly proper to be mentioned now, is, that while they preſerve their integrity, they will never have cauſe to be diſmayed or diſturbed at whatever happens in this world. Some good perſons, indeed, may be tempted to accuſe themſelves of an irreligious inſenſibility, that they have felt

* Dan. x. 21. † Acts viii. 21, 23. ‡ 2 Cor. vii. 1. § Job xxii. 21.

no more on the late occaſion: but if, on any occaſion, they have felt enough to make them fear God and ſerve him, let them never be grieved at what, in all likelihood, is merely conſtitutional, if it be not rather a pious ſerenity. We read, that when *Elijah ſtood before the Lord*, firſt *a great and ſtrong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks; but the Lord was not in the wind: after the wind was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: after the earthquake was a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: after the fire was a ſmall ſtill voice*, and in that God ſpoke to his ſervant *. If then he hath ſpoken to us ever ſo gently, and we have heard him, it ſhould be matter of comfort, not deſpondency, that he hath found no need of uſing words of terror to us. But a much commoner caſe is, that pious minds are ſtruck on theſe extraordinary manifeſtations of divine power, with great ſudden horror. So was *David*: *My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments* †. So was *Moſes* at mount *Sinai*, when he ſaid, *I exceedingly tremble and quake* ‡. Therefore never do you, of weaker ſpirits, either think ill of yourſelves, or wonder if your feelings are both more painful and more durable than you wiſh. Still they are eſſentially different from thoſe of wicked perſons. Your dependence on God will enable you to check your apprehenſions, in ſome meaſure, when at the higheſt, and in a while to recover your former tranquillity: to ſay with *Job*, *Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him* §: or in the more triumphant language of the Pſalmiſt: *God is our hope and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midſt of the ſea* ‖. The whole frame of nature, and every thing that comes to paſs in it, is friendly to perſons in earneſt religious, and *works together for their good* ¶. *Life or death, things preſent or things to come, all things are theirs, and they are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's* **. Earthquakes in particular, terrible as they appear, have often been marks of God's favour to his people. There was one at the death, another at the reſurrection of our bleſſed Lord; the two great bulwarks

* 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. † Pſ. cxix. 120. ‡ Heb. xii. 21.
§ Job xiii. 15. ‖ Pſ. xlvi. 1, 2. ¶ Rom. viii. 28.
** 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

warks of Chriſtian comfort. At *the day of Pentecoſt, there came a ſound from heaven, as of a ruſhing mighty wind* *, probably ſomewhat reſembling the ſound which you heard ſo lately. In a ſhort time after, on the firſt attempt of perſecuting the diſciples, *when they had prayed, the place was ſhaken where they were aſſembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and ſpake the word of God with boldneſs* †. Again, when *Paul* and *Silas* were impriſoned, while they *ſang praiſes unto God, ſuddenly there was a great earthquake, ſo that the foundations of the priſon were ſhaken, and all the doors opened*; which was immediately followed by the converſion of the jailor and his family, and the deliverance of the apoſtle and his companion by the magiſtrates ‡. Why then ſhould that ſo greatly affright you, which hath miniſtered to ſo many others cauſe of thankſgiving?

"It is ſomewhat extremely awful." So is every thing that reminds us, with any ſtrength, of God and our latter end. And yet, if we are not reminded of them effectually, we are undone to eternity. It is not near ſo awful, as what you, notwithſtanding, profeſs to deſire and pray for; the time when he ſhall come to *ſit on his throne, from whoſe face earth and heaven ſhall flee away, and no place be found for them* §. "But we may be ſwallowed up inſtantly." You may this very inſtant. And ſo you may die, every moment, a thouſand other ways beſides. But do you not conſider in whoſe power it is whether you ſhall or not? Cannot God preſerve you? And will he not, if it be for your advantage? Hear the Pſalmiſt: *Whoſo dwelleth under the defence of the Moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. Thou ſhalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor the deſtruction that waſteth at noon-day. A thouſand ſhall fall at thy ſide, and ten thouſand at thy right hand; but it ſhall not come nigh thee. With thine eyes ſhalt thou behold, and ſee the reward of the ungodly* ‖. But if he thinks it proper you ſhould die now, why is it not beſt for you? Shall you not eſcape by it innumerable unknown temptations and hazards to your ſoul, and be ſafe and happy for ever? Humility bids you pray againſt

* Acts ii. 1, 2. † Acts iv. 31. ‡ Acts xvi. 25, &c.
§ Rev. xx. 11. ‖ Pſ. xci. 1, 5, 6, 7, 8.

ſudden death: but reſignation bids you receive it very contentedly, if after all God chooſes it for you. In the moſt important ſenſe, no death is ſudden, for which you are prepared; and good perſons are prepared always.

But perhaps this kind of viſitation alarms you, not merely as a dangerous one, but as a token that God is angry. And he is ſo; but with whom? Not with the good. Or if he be, it is only a fatherly diſpleaſure that we do not become better. And is not any way of ſhewing that infinitely kinder than leaving us unreproved, and letting us grow worſe? If then you perceive yourſelves to have been falling into ſin or negligence, be thankful for ſo timely a warning, and reform. But if you do not, or if you have rectified your courſe, for the honour of religion be of good courage. Keep far, indeed, from levity of heart, ſpeech and behaviour, eſpecially in relation to a providence, intended to produce very different effects; but ſtill maintain and expreſs a peaceful, a cheerful compoſure; nor let it once be ſaid, that you were in the greateſt fear, who have cauſe for none, while they were in none, who have cauſe for the greateſt. Yet if you cannot help this, conſider it only as a very pardonable weakneſs in yourſelves; and inſtead of entertaining even a momentary thought of envying them, recollect with tender pity, how ſwift the hour of that inconceivably more terrible ſhock is coming upon them, which the words of St. *John* deſcribe in ſo awaking a manner. *And I beheld, and lo there was a great earthquake: and the ſun became black as ſackcloth, and the moon became as blood, and the ſtars fell unto the earth, and the heaven departed as a ſcroll, when it is rolled together, and every mountain and iſland were removed out of their place. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich and the mighty, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid themſelves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and ſaid to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand* [*]? If you deſire to be able, your only way is, to obey his commands during life, who is to determine

[*] Rev. vi. 12,—17.

mine your everlaſting ſtate after death; obſerving the apoſtle's exhortation, with which I conclude: *See that ye refuſe not him, that ſpeaketh. For if they eſcaped not, who refuſed him that ſpake on earth,* at the delivery of the law; *much more ſhall not we, if we turn away from him, that ſpeaketh from heaven; whoſe voice then ſhook the earth; but he hath promiſed, ſaying, Yet once more I ſhake, not the earth only, but alſo heaven. And this word, Yet once more, ſignifieth the removing of thoſe things that are ſhaken, as of things that are made; that thoſe, which cannot be ſhaken, may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom, that cannot be moved; let us have grace, whereby we may ſerve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a conſuming fire* *.

* Heb. xii. 25,—29.

SER.

SERMON CXXXIV.

(Preached at the Pariſh-Church of St. *James, Weſtminſter, December* 30. 1750. on reſigning the Rectory.)

A True Christian Paſtor's Valedictory Address to his Flock.

2 Cor. xiii. 11.

Finally, brethren, farewell.——

YOU have expected, for ſeveral months, what you will immediately underſtand the choice of theſe words to import, my reſignation of the office of your miniſter. If any one blames me, or is ſorry for it, I intreat him to conſider: Above ſeventeen years and a half have paſſed over my head in this place. I have ſpent the flower and vigour of my life in your ſervice; and now I find, and muſt expect to find, myſelf growing leſs fit every day for the duties of ſo laborious a cure. You would not wiſh to wear me quite out before my time; I would not wiſh to be burthenſome, without being uſeful to you; and it is much better, that you ſhould be grieved at my departure, than weary of my ſtay; that I ſhould leave you, while I can do ſomething, than continue with you, when I can do nothing; and convenient opportunities of removing are not likely, as you muſt be ſenſible, to happen frequently. Beſides, the care of my dioceſe requires me to be abſent from you near half my time; another perſon may be able to beſtow his upon you almoſt entirely. In ſo long a ſpace I have given offence probably to more perſons than I am aware; whether juſt offence, is not for me to ſay, my ſucceſſor will have offended no one. I have undergone

ſome

ſome pretty ſevere trials, with ſuch temper and ſpirits as I could; but how either would hold out, in my declining age, to undergo more of them, I cannot foreſee. And therefore, on the the whole, I hope it will not be imputed to me as a fault, that I have accepted of the offer, which his majeſty's goodneſs hath been induced to make me. I did not ſollicit to be brought amongſt you; nor have I ſollicited to quit you. I had a large income in the church, when I came hither; I have not enriched myſelf by my abode here; I ſhall not enrich myſelf by going from hence. Hitherto I truſt I have not remarkably conſulted my own eaſe; and hereafter, through God's grace, I ſhall be diligent according to my ability, both in preaching and other duties of my profeſſion. But it muſt not be thought ſtrange, if, amongſt theſe, I chiefly devote myſelf to the private ſtudy of the holy ſcripture, and the daily attendance on divine worſhip, in the ſtation to which I am retiring. I return you my heartieſt thanks for your kind acceptance of my labours, for your indulgence, for your liberality to me. I humbly aſk your pardon for failings and omiſſions, which I am ſenſible have been many; though I can truly ſay, that I have always uprightly endeavoured to promote your good in every thing, ſpiritual and temporal; and would willingly think I need not add, that I have in no inſtance attempted to do you injuſtice. If in any I can properly ſerve this pariſh, or any member of it, I ſhall ever embrace the occaſion with pleaſure. And for the beſt proof that I can give at preſent, of that diſpoſition, I beg leave to mention a few things at parting, about your parochial affairs, your future miniſter, and yourſelves, which I conceive may be uſeful to you; and concerning which I beſeech you to bear the ſame freedom of ſpeech from me, that you have allowed me to uſe, on other ſubjects, for ſo many years paſt.

I begin with your civil affairs. For both the management of them, and the judgment paſſed upon it, are points that may conſiderably affect, not only your intereſt, but your conſcience too. Conducting them right is matter of conſcience, on one hand; and abſtaining from unjuſt accuſations or ſuſpicions, and feeling ſentiments of juſt gratitude is ſo on the other. In ſome of theſe matters I have had a ſhare, jointly with your other veſtrymen; and ſhould by no means do them juſtice,

were I to omit ſaying, that I have found thoſe of them, who have attended, impartially and diſintereſtedly ſtudious, as might indeed be expected from their ranks and characters, of promoting your general welfare; and rectifying errors, and framing and executing due regulations. To theſe, therefore, in particular, I make my grateful acknowledgments for the aſſiſtance and ſupport, which they have ſo conſtantly and unanimouſly afforded me, in the moſt friendly and obliging manner. Nor are they few or ſmall things, which, on a fair inquiry, you will find to have been done by them for your advantage, within the laſt twenty years; and that more have not, is principally owing to this, that their authority extends to a leſs part of your concerns by far, than I believe you commonly imagine. For inſtance, it doth not extend to the moſt important article, the care of your poor; concerning the maintenance of whom, however, they have, in my time, drawn up and recommended rules, that were the product of much examination and thought; and on more occaſions than one, have given and repeated ſuch advice, as, in ſome things, hath proved extremely ſerviceable; and would have been ſo in more, had it been ſooner and better followed.

Beſides your veſtry, there are ſeveral meetings of other perſons for pariſh buſineſs, vulgarly called by the ſame name, becauſe they have been uſually held in the ſame place. And of theſe alſo I can aſſure you, with great truth, that ſuch as I have been entitled to attend, are carried on with perfect fidelity, and no ſmall vigilance. The affairs tranſacted in them are, the diſpoſal of the money collected yearly from houſe to houſe on the king's letter; the direction of that excellent inſtitution, your ſchool of charity-girls; and the diſtribution of the money given at the ſacrament; part of which is employed in buying coals, and coats and gowns for indigent perſons, in the winter ſeaſon; part in clothing, teaching and putting apprentices, forty boys of the pariſh; part in relieving, by the joint approbation of the rector and church-wardens, who meet for that end, ſuch other objects of compaſſion, as apply to them; and of all the diſburſements before-mentioned, as exact an account, as well can be, is kept. Thus far, therefore, I can anſwer for it, that you are ſerved faithfully; whatever prudential improvements longer experience

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and better judgment may be able to make, as they have already made ſome.

And in officers, whoſe proceedings have not uſually fallen within my immediate knowledge, I have had very little ground to ſuſpect wilful or groſs corruption or negligence; and often the utmoſt reaſon to be aſſured of exemplary uprightneſs and aſſiduity. Still the burthen of your poor is both a heavy one, as I fear it is in moſt old pariſhes, and a growing one, as I fear it is in all, old or new. That it cannot be leſſened, I would on no account venture to ſay. On the contrary, I would earneſtly exhort, here in public, thoſe of you who are now, or hereafter ſhall be overſeers, as I have often done your predeceſſors in private, and, I hope, not quite in vain, to procure all the information, and take all the pains, that your other engagements will permit, for that purpoſe; to be very tender indeed to the needy, where there is cauſe; but not to be moved by falſe good-nature of your own, by groundleſs importunities of theirs, or unreaſonable recommendations of other perſons, to beſtow on any, eſpecially the undeſerving, more than is really neceſſary. I would further exhort you, with the ſame intent, to diſcountenance, as much as you poſſibly can, idleneſs, intemperance and debauchery, which are the main cauſes of indigence; and uſe your utmoſt influence, to make the attendance on divine worſhip and inſtruction, at the infirmary, univerſal, conſtant and beneficial; to ſtudy unanimity and mutual aſſiſtance, and *let nothing be done through ſtrife or vain-glory* *: to deſpiſe little advantages and ſelf-indulgences, which, though they may be but a trifling foundation for complaint, frequently occaſion a great deal; and, together with doing what good you can, labour to keep *your good* from being *evil ſpoken of* †; particularly by a readineſs to give ſatisfaction on any article of your conduct, to every fair inquirer who is concerned to aſk it; endeavouring, according to the apoſtle's rule, *that no man ſhould blame you in this abundance, which is adminiſtered by you,* and *providing for honeſt things, not only in the ſight of the Lord, but in the ſight of men* ‡. For thus you will diſcharge your own conſciences, and prevent at once needleſs expence and uncharitable reflexions;

* Phil. ii. 3. † Rom. xiv. 16. ‡ 2 Cor. viii. 20, 21.

flexions; you will gain eſteem to yourſelves, and to the office that you ſerve; make it both eaſy, and in ſome meaſure neceſſary, to your ſucceſſors, to act rightly too; and ſo perhaps will long reap your ſhare of profit, as well as credit, from what you have done.

But then I muſt at the ſame time, with equal earneſtneſs, beg thoſe, who do not ſerve ſuch offices, to conſider, with equity, the caſe of ſuch as do. Reflect a little firſt, how tedious and irkſome an employment it is, to go about collecting rates at thouſands of doors. Should not you think it very hard, to have this work doubled and trebled upon you, by being needleſsly ſent away, and obliged to come again ſeveral times over? Reflect alſo, how diſagreeable it muſt be, to diſtribute this collection weekly, daily, hourly almoſt, amongſt fourteen or fifteen hundred miſerable wretches; to hear and ſee the diſtreſſes of them all; to guard againſt the frauds, bear the noiſomeneſs, undergo the ill-language of too many of them. Would you imagine, that by doing all this, and receiving nothing for it, you had deſerved to be ſpoken of as the worſt of men? But you will ſay, there are grievous abuſes. And it is impoſſible to anſwer for every caſe or every perſon, through a courſe of years. But on the whole, I verily believe, there is little or no deſigned abuſe; and of indiſcreet management leſs than is apprehended. But were there as much, conſider again; perſons of higher rank diſdain to undertake ſo mean an office, as that of overſeers. Tradeſmen therefore muſt; who, from their education, cannot always have the moſt extended, or the cleareſt views of things; who have their own buſineſs to fill up moſt of their time, which muſt be minded, elſe they are undone; who come unexperienced into this difficult employment, and do not continue in it long enough to acquire experience ſufficient; are backward perhaps, as we moſt of us are, to take directions from others; are often divided in opinion amongſt themſelves; and by the time that they can agree what is right, find or think too much of their year gone, to ſet about the execution of it; who, beſides all this, are too commonly driven to do what they would not, by the ſolicitations of their neighbours, and even of their ſuperiors, on whom they depend; nay, ſometimes they are traduced and vilified for aiming to be more frugal than thoſe

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that went before them. Surely to perſons in theſe circumſtances great allowances ought to be made; and that in prudence, as well equity. Deſpair of pleaſing you will tempt them to be careleſs what they do; whereas, if you manifeſt a diſpoſition to be ſatisfied with them, and thankful to them, ſo far as you have cauſe, you will excite them to deſerve ſtill better of you; eſpecially, if, along with this, they were but more conſtantly and regularly inſpected, aſſiſted and ſupported by the juſtices of the peace; to whom therefore I beg leave here to recommend this good work, as I have done elſewhere, more than once. And I do it at preſent with the greater hope of ſucceſs, becauſe I know ſeveral of them are deſirous of undertaking it; and am perſuaded, that nothing but want of concert, and putting the matter in a due method, prevents it.

I have dwelt ſomewhat longer on the affairs of your poor, becauſe they have produced uneaſineſſes among you, not only againſt one another, but againſt your miniſter; though he hath no more concern in them, than to pay his proportion towards this, as well as other common burthens; excepting his general duty, of exhorting all under his care to do theirs. And I hope you muſt ſee, that this exhortation of mine, which I have often thought of giving you before now, hath no other motive than a moſt hearty deſire, that, to ſpeak in the words immediately after the text, you may *be of one mind*, and *live in peace, and the God of love and peace be with you.* Let me now mention another thing of a more eccleſiaſtical nature. This building, in which we are, greatly wants both cleaning and beautifying, as is too viſible, and repairing alſo; which the law, that founded the pariſh, requires to be done by a rate levied on the inhabitants. Leſſer repairs have been made, without a rate, for many years paſt, out of the incomes ariſing from pews and burials. But that from the latter is greatly diminiſhed; and both together cannot near do what is wanted. And yet taking the method, which, after all, muſt be taken, and the ſooner the better, hath been delayed for fear of clamour. Let me beſeech you therefore, to remove theſe apprehenſions of your officers beforehand, as far as you can, by proper aſſurances that you underſtand the caſe rightly; and when the work is undertaken, to contribute your allotted ſhares with cheerfulneſs. I would not urge you to ſuch low

conſiderations, as that of not coming behind other pariſhes in this reſpect, whom you excel ſo vaſtly in wealth and rank. It is much fitter to remind you of the diſtinguiſhed honour, due by reaſon, ſcripture, and the conſent of mankind, to ſacred things; and of the duty and wiſdom of not furniſhing a pretence, either to unbelievers, or Papiſts, for triumphing over Chriſtianity, or Proteſtantiſm; as not requiring, or not being able to obtain, from its profeſſors, any degree of that decency in their churches, which even the middle ſort of them would not bear to be wanting in their dwelling-houſes. Indeed every thing public, though of a civil nature only, and yet more of a religious, ought far to exceed, in point of dignity, what is for mere private uſe. And the neglect of that rule both ſhews, and will increaſe, a prevalence of perſonal intereſts to thoſe of the community. We read, that many among the children of *Iſrael*, both men and women, brought voluntary *offerings unto the Lord*, for the work of the tabernacle *. The early Chriſtians imitated their example, as ſoon as they durſt; and after the ſuperfluous ornaments of following ages were juſtly diſapproved; valuable preſents have been made in the reformed church of *England*, and in this very church, for the greater ſolemnity and beauty of divine ſervice. Why would it not now be one fitting mark of regard to God, if perſons of fortune and condition were to do the ſame thing? At leaſt, will it not be a lamentable mark of diſregard to him, if any murmur to do what the law enjoins them?

But I proceed to ſpeak to you concerning your future miniſter. When I prepared this part of my diſcourſe, I had not the leaſt gueſs who it would be; nor have I added or altered one word ſince; nor am I ſure that I know, even now; if I do, he is almoſt entirely a ſtranger to me, except by what he hath written, which is excellent. And therefore you muſt underſtand me to ſpeak without any particular reference to the perſon, but only on a general conſideration of the caſe. The ſpiritual and eternal good of multitudes of ſouls will depend, not a little, on their attention to his inſtructions; and that will depend very much on the opinion formed of him, and the reception given him, at firſt. For God's ſake therefore,

* Exod. xxv. 5, &c.

fore, let none of you ſet out with prepoſſeſſions againſt him of any kind. For in all likelihood they will wrong him; and aſſuredly they will do harm to you. But eſpecially I beg, that whoever profeſſes any reſpect for me, would ſhew it, by paying a peculiar reſpect to my ſucceſſor. In whatſoever he excels me, as I ſincerely wiſh he may in all things, acknowledge it freely, thank God for it, give him the encouragement of knowing it; and never let any one be ſo abſurd as to imagine, that he ſhall perform either a right or an acceptable part to me, by detracting in the leaſt from his merit. If in any thing he ſhould ſeem to be inferior, probably a little time and uſe may change your minds; you may be reconciled to, and perhaps by degrees prefer, what you diſliked, when it was new to you. Or if not, remember the apoſtle's obſervation: *Every man hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner, another after that* *. He that is only ſecond in ſuch or ſuch an attainment, may be firſt in a different one, of equal or greater benefit. And it is very unfair to judge of a man's character or uſefulneſs, on the whole, by a ſingle or a few articles. Beſides, he will be able to adapt both his diſcourſes and his behaviour to you much better after a time, than is poſſible while he is yet unacquainted with you; and to undertake more for your ſervice, after ſome ſpace for preparation, than juſt at preſent; which you may recollect was my own caſe. Therefore do not expect too much from him, nor be too eaſy of belief againſt him, in the beginning. And afterwards both conſider and inquire, what is reaſonable to expect, and what not, before you find fault.

The bodies and the voices of men, you well know, are not equally ſtrong; and one may exert himſelf without danger to a degree which another, though ſeemingly as well qualified by nature, muſt not attempt. Now, *where there is a willing mind, it is accepted* by Heaven, and ſhould be by you, *according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not* †. And though perſons be able, yet ſuch things as are not enjoined, and have not been cuſtomary, you have no right to demand or expect from them. Permit me to mention a few of theſe. The Sunday evenings lecture on the catechiſm

* 1 Cor. vii. 7. † 2 Cor. viii. 12.

techiſm had its riſe but twelve years ago: and there is none then, and ſcarce any on week-days, in the neighbouring pariſhes. Sermons occaſionally by your miniſter at the chapels, in the afternoon, are not above five years older than that. The ſalary for the reading of early and late prayers at this church was paid at firſt by voluntary ſubſcriptions, afterwards out of the offertory money, but now, for the laſt twenty years, by the rector; and I believe no ſuch thing is done by any rector elſewhere in the nation. The diſtribution of religious tracts, at his coſt, to the pariſhioners, particularly to thoſe who are inſtructed for confirmation, is yet of later date. And therefore, if your ſucceeding miniſter omits theſe things, you are not to blame him; if he continues any of them, you are to thank him.

Another point, a-kin to the laſt, in which I muſt entreat you to be reaſonable with him, is the expectation of charity from him. I have all along had other conſiderable preferment together with this. I have had ſums of money, ſeveral times of late years, and this laſt a very great one, entruſted to my diſpoſal. The caſe of my ſucceſſor may be extremely different: and both the high and the low among you ſhould allow for the difference. It is become very uſual with many of you to recommend, when requeſted, any poor perſon whom you know, I am ſorry to add, and more than a few, whom you do not know, to the rector for relief; being deceived, perhaps, by ſtories of pretended legacies or gifts, put into his hands for that purpoſe: and then he muſt either run a riſk of diſobliging you, by rejecting your recommendations, or be overburdened with the expence which they bring on him, or at leaſt every hour almoſt of his time will be broken, and filled up with hearing and examining diſtreſſes and characters. This laſt inconvenience, I aſſure you, hath grown upon me in ſuch a manner, that I do not know how I could have continued to go through it. Therefore, when poor perſons apply to you, remember you ought to relieve them yourſelves, if you are able; and if you are unable, you ſhould conſider, that more objects than enough will come of courſe to the knowledge of your miniſter, without adding to them thus. We of the clergy ſhould undoubtedly be ready, both to give our own alms plentifully, and to aſſiſt others in giving theirs: but

but ſtill, as even the apoſtles pleaded, *it is not reaſon, that we ſhould leave the word of God, and ſerve tables* *.

Another thing, which I muſt take the liberty of aſking for my ſucceſſor, is your bounty. I again return you my thanks for that which you have exerciſed towards me. But indulge me, at the ſame time, a few words on the ſubject. There are indeed legal dues, belonging to the rectory, ſo conſiderable, that were they all paid, and nothing more added, probably the income would be greater than it now is. But they are ſo far from being all paid, that in the principal article, Eaſter offerings, though expreſsly required by the act of parliament, which founded the pariſh, I believe two thouſand families, out of three, pay nothing. Such as are known to be poor, are never aſked. Such as only ſay they are poor, though that plea would neither be allowed them, nor made by them, in any other caſe, are never aſked again. And ſuch as refuſe, without condeſcending to allege any reaſon, have not, in my time, been either compelled, or, to my knowledge, threatened or ſolicited. Yet ſurely it may be ſaid, without offence, by one who hath now no intereſt depending, that in ſuch matters, as well as others, conſcience binds all men, both to pay what they know is due, and to make a fair inquiry, whether what is demanded be not due. If they, that will do neither, were forced, they would have no cauſe to complain. But the more your miniſter loſes by his averſion to harſh methods, the more he is entitled to your voluntary kindneſs. This alone is what makes his income large: and were it yet larger than it is, as perhaps you think it, permit me to ſay, he that doth the work, deſerves the wages; out of which no ſmall deductions will be made by calls upon him of various kinds. The utmoſt that almoſt any of you give, bears, I conceive, no very high proportion to ſeveral of your annual expences on other perſons and purpoſes, of leſs importance, to ſay no worſe. And diminiſhing your generoſity muſt be, in ſome meaſure, to the moſt diſintereſted man, not only an undeſerved mortification, but a diſcouragement of his zeal to ſerve you. On every account, therefore, obey the ſcripture rule, which,

* Acts vi. 2.

which, take notice, is general: *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things* *.

But a far more valuable mark of your regard to your miniſter, and, I dare ſay, beyond compariſon a more agreeable one to him, will be your attendance on him here. I ſee no cauſe to doubt, but you will have every inducement to this that you ever have had; and you will aſſuredly have the ſtrongeſt which you can have, that aſſembling yourſelves for worſhip and inſtruction is the ordinance of Chriſt, from which you may expect ſuch a bleſſing on your hearts and lives, as you cannot expect without it. And I have taught you all this while to very little effect, if you have not yet learnt, that *neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increaſe* †. If you *have mens perſons in admiration* ‡, and come only to hear this or that preacher, however you are pleaſed, however you are moved, no real and laſting good will be at all likely to follow: and if you come to hear the goſpel, *not as the word of men*, but as *the word of God* §, let who will diſpenſe it, you will receive benefit.

This place, indeed, doth not afford room for all the inhabitants: but the room which it doth afford, is moſt equitably allotted to ſuch as made the earlieſt application for it; and they, who cannot as yet be accommodated here, may, without difficulty, at the two chapels. No one, therefore, needs omit divine ſervice; eſpecially, as you have prayers four times every day at the church, twice every day at the chapels, and ſermons twice every Lord's day at both. You have alſo had, for a conſiderable part of the year, a lecture on the catechiſm, equivalent to a ſermon, both on the evening of that day, and the morning of another, the latter of which at leaſt you will probably continue to have. And ſurely you may prevail on yourſelves, if need be, to alter your uſual hour of eating or viſiting, once or twice a-week, in order to come the oftener, and adore your Maker; to hear his word, and give your ſervants time to do the ſame thing. Nay, why may not many of you ſo regulate your affairs, as to frequent daily prayers in the church? Few of you, I fear, have them

* Gal. vi. 6. † 1 Cor. iii. 7. ‡ Jude, ver. 16. § 1 Theſſ. ii. 13.

them in your families: *I ſpeak this to your ſhame* *. Nor muſt I fail to remind you, as you know I have done, of that highly uſeful, and by no means terrible or difficult duty, of receiving the Lord's ſupper; enjoined all Chriſtians, and yet abſolutely ſlighted by moſt. But obſerve, at the ſame time, that private prayer and meditation, ſuited to your inward ſtate, is a duty full as important as public prayer, or hearing ſermons, or partaking of the table of the Lord; and the latter, without the former, will be of ſmall efficacy. You may, if you will, deſpiſe either or both: and they are commonly deſpiſed, to a degree not known in any other Chriſtian country, nor in this before the preſent age: but the world is not the better for it; nor will you. Your virtue will become inſecure, and grievouſly imperfect; your ſenſe of piety will wither away; your hopes of futurity will grow faint; your fears of it, when you reflect, will ſtrengthen, till you will be glad to throw off both together, if you can, and live and die like the beaſts that periſh. Others will learn, and in part from you, to think and act in the ſame manner; every one's profit, pleaſure, anger or caprice, will be the only rule of his conduct; and what ſecurity of any ſingle enjoyment of life can there be, in ſuch a ſtate of things?

But then, alas! going through every exerciſe of devotion, both here and at home, merely to do our ſhare towards keeping ſociety in good order, is policy, not religion; and going through them for the ſake of the outward act, without care to improve by them, is ſuperſtition; miſtaking the means for the end. *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared unto all men,* not to fix their expectations of future happineſs on forms of any ſort, but to *teach them, that denying godlineſs and worldly luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world, looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works* †. Theſe are the fundamental doctrines of Chriſtianity: and I appeal to your conſciences, whether they are not alſo the doctrines which I have perpe-

* 1 Cor. vi. 5. xv. 34. † Tit. ii. 11,—14.

tually inculcated upon you, though with mixtures, no doubt too frequent, of human infirmity and error. Yet notwithſtanding theſe, I truſt, through God's mercy, I can ſafely ſay with St. *Paul, Ye know, from the firſt day that I came among you, how I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have ſhewed and taught you; teſtifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And could I ſay alſo, that I had done this, in a proper degree, *from houſe to houſe*, as well as *publicly*, then I might, with him too, *take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men* *. But, though I hope I have never been backward to embrace opportunities of this ſort, when offered me, yet that I have not more diligently ſought them, and laboured to introduce more ſerious diſcourſe into my ordinary viſits to you, I am ſenſible is a fault, which neither the uncommonneſs of ſuch converſation, nor the fear of diſguſting perſons by it, are ſufficient to excuſe. Allow me, therefore, to make you ſuch amends as I can, for this and all my defects, by admoniſhing you ſolemnly now, and leaving it on your hearts, that religion is the greateſt and moſt important of truths; that the buſineſs of this tranſitory life, compared with which, profits, pleaſures, honours, acquiſitions of all ſorts, are trifles and follies, is the preparing for an endleſs one to come; that the true preparation conſiſts in active love to God, and man, and virtue; that ſuch love can never be duly excited or maintained within us, but by the methods which Heaven hath directed; and that theſe are, a deep conviction of our guilt and weakneſs; an earneſt and daily application to our heavenly Father, in faith of the merits of his crucified Son, for the pardon of our tranſgreſſions, and the ſanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit; a conſtant attentive uſe of thoſe ordinances, by which he hath appointed both to be conveyed; a conſcientious watchful care of governing our actions, words and thoughts, not by the dictates of inclination or faſhion, but the precepts of reaſon and ſcripture. If I have taught any of you theſe things effectually, God's name be praiſed: teach them your children, your ſervants, your friends; for neglecting their inſtruction is partaking in their ſins. If I have not, for his ſake,

* Acts xx. 18, 20, 21, 26.

ſake, and that of your ſouls, learn them now; elſe *I have preached*, and *you have believed, in vain* *; and woe will be to me, or you, or both of us, at the great day.

You have peculiar cauſe to *take heed how ye hear* †. Perſons of high rank every where, and this pariſh hath many ſuch, are concerned, beyond others, to be *patterns of good works* ‡; and are too commonly, beyond others, patterns of bad ones. Both they, and the middle part of you, live amongſt innumerable incitements to unlawful gratifications, unfit expences, and waſte of precious time, even the moſt precious of all, that of this day, in idle pernicious amuſements. And the contagion of this over-grown wicked city tempts the loweſt part of you, moſt dangerouſly, to all ſorts of crimes. Think then, how carefully you ought to preſerve yourſelves and yours, by the antidote of God's word and worſhip, from ſo deſtructive and deceitful poiſons.

Great numbers of you have attended here very aſſiduouſly: you muſt have felt ſomething ſtirred within you, that hath induced you to it: the hopes of your ſalvation depend on the fruit which that ſhall bring forth; and ſurely then you will not let it be blaſted, and die away. To many of you I have ſpoken many years; to ſome as long as you can remember: what benefit have you received? Barely receiving pleaſure is nothing. It will rather aggravate your condemnation, if what hath affected you hath not influenced you. Are you then become real, practical, inward, uniform Chriſtians? If not, you are now going to have another teacher; mind what you are taught in another manner, or you are undone for ever. *But, beloved, we are perſuaded better things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation, though we thus ſpeak* §.

Yet ſtill, ſuppoſing you are truly religious, a further exceedingly material queſtion is, To what degree in religion are you arrived? Is it a confirmed, lively, increaſing one, or faint and tottering? Unleſs you gain ground, you will loſe it; if you are negligent, you will fall; and if you imagine yourſelves as pious and virtuous as you need be, you are almoſt as far from it as you can be. Search then diligently, ſtrengthen what is weak, and add what is deficient, *that ye may be*

* 1 Cor. xv. 2. † Luke viii. 18. ‡ Tit. ii. 7. § Heb. vi. 9.

perfect and entire, wanting nothing *. Whatever due inſtruction I may have omitted to give you, it ought to have been, and is, your concern to ſupply it to yourſelves; and if I have in any meaſure performed that duty as I ought, remember, improvement will be expected from you, in proportion to the advantages which you have enjoyed. Through God's mercy, ſome of you, that were bad, I have cauſe to think are become good; and ſome, that were good, become better: but alas, how few are theſe, amongſt the thouſands of whom this pariſh conſiſts! O may there prove to be many more than are come to my knowledge! Elſe I *muſt give account* of the ſucceſs of my miniſtry *with grief* †: for the largeſt and beſt part of it hath been employed on you: and fain, therefore, would I perſuade myſelf, that it will be found to have produced a tolerable ſhare of good effect. *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye, in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, at his coming* ‡? But however I have failed hitherto, let me not, I beſeech you, fail now to obtain, that if ever I have ſaid any thing to you, which raiſed any one Chriſtian purpoſe or deſire in your hearts, you would at length ſet yourſelves to recollect and accompliſh it; and that if you have experienced nothing of this kind from my preaching, you would the more conſcientiouſly open your breaſts to the impreſſions of that which you will attend next: for glad ſhall I be to have promoted your ſpiritual welfare, be it only by this final requeſt; and to learn, that the ſeed which ſhall be ſown from henceforward, yields, beyond compariſon, a more plentiful harveſt than that which preceded. For *God is my record*, if I may preſume to adopt the apoſtle's words, *how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jeſus Chriſt: and this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in judgment, that ye may approve the things that are excellent, that ye may be ſincere and without offence till the day of the Lord, being filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt, unto the glory and praiſe of God* §. *Let* then *your converſation be as becometh the goſpel; that whether I come and ſee you, or be abſent, I may hear of*

* James i. 4. † Heb. xiii. 17. ‡ 1 Theſſ. ii. 19. § Phil. i. 8,—11.

of your affairs, that ye ſtand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind; not as in my preſence only, but now much more in my abſence, working out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do* †.

Underſtand me not to mean taking an abſolute and final leave of you. *As long as I live in this tabernacle,* to ſpeak the language of St. *Peter, I* ſhall *think it meet,* if deſired and able, *to ſtir you up, by putting you in remembrance* ‡. But this is the laſt time I ſhall ſtand here in that peculiar relation to you which I have borne ſo long. *And now,* therefore, *brethren,* to conclude with pronouncing over you the ſolemn farewell of St. *Paul, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are ſanctified* §. There may we meet again, never to part more!

* Phil. i. 27. † Phil. ii. 12, 13. ‡ 2 Pet. i. 13. § Acts xx. 32.

SER-

SERMON CXXXV.

(Preached before the Governors of the *London* Hoſpital, or Infirmary, for the Relief of Sick and Diſeaſed Perſons, eſpecially Manufacturers, and Seamen in Merchants Service, *&c.* at the Pariſh-Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, on *Wedneſday*, *February* 20. 1754.

SIMPLICITY MINGLED WITH LIBERALITY, ACTIVITY WITH GOVERNING, AND CHEERFULNESS WITH MERCY, STRIKING MARKS OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

ROM. xii. 8.

—He that giveth, let him do it with ſimplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that ſheweth mercy, with cheerfulneſs.

OF all the benevolent feelings which God hath planted in our nature, compaſſion is the moſt valuable: for it prompts us the moſt directly to relieve the miſerable, whoſe diſtreſſes are much greater than the enjoyments of the happy can be here below; and yet, without the call of this tender ſympathy, we ſhould, far oftener than we do, turn our eyes from them, and leave them to their fate. Perſons of all ranks are frequently in circumſtances that demand pity: but the higher part of the world have it more in their power to avoid ſufferings than the loweſt; and it is eaſier to aſſiſt the latter effectually. Their poverty alone, indeed, if they are well able to provide themſelves neceſſaries, wants no aſſiſtance. It is one requiſite ſtate in the ſcale of things, appointed by the wiſdom of Providence; and allows them a very comfortable enjoyment

enjoyment of life. But if work be ſcarce, or their families large, they may be grievouſly ſtraitened, even in health; and in their ſickneſs, their condition, though ſingle, is lamentable; and, when married, often extremely ſo. If only a child be ſick, they have ſeldom leiſure to attend it duly, but if the parents are ſick, all the children muſt be neglected; and the labour, which uſed to maintain them, ceaſe. They are deſtitute, both of knowledge what to do, and of money to procure directions and medicines, nay, perhaps, proper food. They follow, at random, the ſuggeſtions of neighbours, no wiſer than themſelves; or, after languiſhing long, and growing worſe than they needed, have recourſe for cure, often to ignorant, often to rapacious creatures; who, if thy chance to recover, yet ſtrip them of all, and load them with debts, that diſquiet the reſt of their days; and too commonly drive them to deſtructive cordials, which unhappily the moſt needy can afford; or deſperate acts of injuſtice to others, or violence to their own perſons.

Religion, humanity, common prudence, loudly require us to reſcue them from ſuch dreadful evils. For they are our brethren, and God hath committed them to our care; we owe to their induſtry all that we enjoy; and without their aid, ſhould be far more helpleſs than they. It is true, many of them fall into diſeaſes and want through their own faults; and bounty to them may encourage thoſe faults. But many alſo, with the utmoſt diligence and parſimony, can but juſt live. Now ſurely ſuch ought to have the comfort of knowing, that in all events they ſhall be ſecured from extremities. And even could we diſtinguiſh the blameable from the reſt, we ſhould make allowances to them, for ignorance, frailty, temptation; as we hope God and Man will do to us, who have leſs excuſe. While they are well, indeed, it will be right to let them fare more hardly; but neglecting them, when they are ill, is expoſing them to periſh, is next to murdering them. Their diſtemper, it muſt be owned, is from God's hand; but he commands us, both by nature and ſcripture, to alleviate it, if we can; and doubtful conſequences afford no plea to the contrary. How do we know, that mercy, exerciſed prudently, will not reclaim them; or that refuſing it will prove a warning to them, or to others?

If

If then the ſick poor ought to have relief, what is the beſt manner of giving it? Barely ſupplying them with food, is doing little or nothing towards their cure; and every days continuance of their ſickneſs, that can be prevented, is juſt ſo much unneceſſary addition of wretchedneſs to themſeves, and of damage to the public. If we furniſh them with money alſo, they will often miſapply it. If we procure them advice and medicines; diſperſed, unprovided, and unteachable as they are, the charge will uſually be heavy, and the ſucceſs very uncertain. Therefore parochial infirmaries have been erected, where they could; and may be of conſiderable uſe, but far inferior to larger hoſpitals. They are much more liable to the bad influence of private intereſt and partiality: Governors, practitioners, attendants, will ſeldom be near ſo well qualified; and the coſt of each patient, will be vaſtly greater. Public hoſpitals then, are evidently the moſt deſirable. There, cheats will never apply: proper objects may have what is needful, as ſoon as ever they are indiſpoſed: If able, may go on with their buſineſs; if not, may be taken into the houſe. Thus, in both caſes, they partake of the united ſkill of learned perſons, almoſt as largely as the higheſt of their betters. And, in the latter caſe, their families are diſburdened of them; their lodgings are much quieter and wholeſomer, than their own can eaſily be; their phyſic is duly given, their diet and whole regimen ſuited to their condition; and the ſymptoms and turns of their diſeaſe watched over, and reported, by experienced nurſes. Then further, the art of healing is improved in theſe places beyond all others: not, as the vulgar ſometimes fancy, by raſh trials of dangerous experiments; but by frequent occaſions for able profeſſors to conſult, and ingenious candidates to learn from them, to the common advantage of all ranks of men.

But, though public infirmaries are in general highly uſeful; and have accordingly been ſet up in many parts of this nation lately; and in none, I believe, laid down again, or diſliked: yet they are the moſt uſeful in the moſt populous cities. For to theſe, helpleſs wretches need not be ſent from a diſtance, but are always at hand in them: they contain many poor ſtrangers, that come occaſionally; many ſojourners, that have no legal ſettlements. And beſides, even ſuch as have, are leſs known

known to the rich, and leſs minded, amidſt their hurry of buſineſs or pleaſure, than in villages or ſmaller towns. Now multitudes of theſe, are continually falling ſick, and receiving hurts, and, if left to themſelves in their miſerable cellars and garrets, muſt ſuffer beyond conception, and moſt of them die. As therefore this is, to ſpeak moderately, one of the largeſt of cities, and the buſieſt alſo, which increaſes accidents, hoſpitals are peculiarly neceſſary for it.

Some may think there were enough before the erection of ours. But the contrary is manifeſt: for the others are not emptier ſince. And though, inſtead of ſix beds, with which it began thirteen years ago, it hath now one hundred and thirty-five, which have been filled near nine times each, during the laſt year; yet a large proportion of pitiable objects, brought in or recommended, have been rejected for want of room: how cutting a diſappointment to them, you may, by ſuppoſing their misfortunes your own, in ſome low degree imagine. Of out patients, there have been nine thouſand four hundred, within the ſame time; and were, on the firſt of *January* laſt, ſixteen hundred on the books; which great reſort, a remarkable diſtinction of our hoſpital from all others, proves the neceſſity of it, particularly in that quarter; and, at the ſame time, the good ſucceſs of the remedies adminiſtered in it. But ſtill that ſucceſs would be vaſtly augmented, if more could be taken in; becauſe from a diſtance many cannot come at all for advice; and few will come for it ſo often, or follow it ſo ſtrictly, as they ſhould: nor will they be either dieted or nurſed at home near ſo well.

It may ſeem an objection to the enlargement of hoſpitals, that the inhabitants within the bills of mortality are leſſening. But alas, their diſeaſes and diſtreſſes are increaſing at the ſame time. Intemperance, eſpecially in ſpirituous liquors, and debauchery, deſtroy their health and fruitfulneſs: Love of pleaſures and amuſements, makes them idle and neceſſitous; and contempt of religion, leaves bad inclinations unreſtrained. Were we wiſe, the utmoſt zeal would be ſhown to ſtop this torrent of folly and ſin, by the authority, and above all by the example, of ſuperiors: which, eſpecially when it is bad, the next beneath them will imitate; and ſo downwards, to the loweſt of all. For it is a ſtrange defect in policy, not to think

of preventing perſons from making themſelves uſeleſs and wretched, but only of reſtoring them to a condition of doing it again. But unleſs the former be vigorouſly attempted by well adviſed methods, of which God grant us better hope, there will be a growing demand for hoſpitals, till the number of our people is reduced yet further.

Still it may be alleged, that the burden of ſupporting them, inſtead of reſting, as it doth on a few, ſhould be laid on the community by a law. But the poor cannot make this law; nor doth it appear that the rich will: not to ſay, that if it were made, the charitable would loſe one principal method of ſatisfying their own minds, as well as others, that they are truely ſuch. And beſides, how are we ſure that the care would be ſo effectual, and the charge, indeed our own ſhare of it, leſs, or ſo little, under the management of legal officers, *taking the overſight by conſtraint, or for lucre,* as of thoſe who take it *willingly, and of a ready mind**? However, at preſent, hoſpitals muſt depend on voluntary gifts, as they have done in time paſt.

Not that this excellent inſtitution began early in the world: which may ſeem very ſtrange. But poſſibly diſtempers were formerly fewer. And certainly, among the ancient heathens, tenderneſs of heart towards the wretched was no common virtue †. Nor did it among the *Jews* extend far; though *Moſes* enjoins it towards all men, repeatedly and pathetically ‡. But our bleſſed Saviour, the ſingular good-nature of whoſe doctrine is one ſtrong evidence of its divine original, beſides teaching more efficaciouſly, than had ever been done before, the obligation of mutual love in general, hath particularly

* 1 Pet. v. 2.

† The direction and practice of *Cato* the Cenſor was, to ſell ſlaves, when they became diſeaſed, or otherwiſe unfit for labour. *Cato de Re Ruſtica, Plut. in Cat.* And *Suetonius* ſaith, that in the reign of *Claudius*, (when the *Romans* were poliſhed in the higheſt degree, and philoſophy had tried its utmoſt influence upon them) ſome expoſed their ſick ſlaves to periſh in the iſle of *Æſculapius* at *Rome*: on which account the emperor ordered, that expoſing them, ſhould be deemed giving them their liberty, if they recovered; and that, if any choſe rather to put them to death, it ſhould be puniſhed, as murder. *Suet. in Claud.* c. 25.

‡ Exod. xxii. 21. xxiii. 9, 12. Lev. xix. 33, 34. xxv. 25, 37, 37. Deut. x 19. xxiv. 14, 15, 17.—22. xxvii. 19.

larly inforced mercy to the ſick, by his miracles of healing, by his parable of the good *Samaritan* *, by his affecting deſcription of his own future behaviour at the great day of judgement†. In conſequence of this, we find the primitive Chriſtians, the moſt benevolent of men ‡: and the affection of their ſucceſſors to each other, a ſubject of general wonder §. We find thoſe of *Rome*, who were the richeſt, ſending alms to their brethren throughout the earth‖: and thoſe of *Alexandria* and *Carthage*, in the deſolations of a dreadful plague, miniſtering to the infected, with aſtoniſhing courage, while the heathens gave proofs of the moſt ſhocking neglect and barbarity ¶. Nay, thoſe of the whole eaſtern empire, juſt after the ſeveral cities of it had been perſecuting them, in the reign of *Maximin*, were the only perſons, who aſſiſted others in the double diſtreſs of peſtilence and famine; attending on the dying, burying the dead, feeding the hungry, without diſtinction; which they did continually, with ſuch tenderneſs and bounty in every reſpect, that they and their God were publicly celebrated and honoured for it by all men **. Nor do Chriſtian writers alone aſcribe to them this character. The profane *Lucian* acknowledges and ridicules their plentiful almſgiving ††. The apoſtate emperor *Julian* confeſſes, that the worſhippers of his gods, diſregarded their own poor, and the Chriſtians maintained thoſe of both profeſſions. He gives exhortations to the former, and undeniably taken out of the New Teſtament, to amend, and imitate the *Galileans* in this and many other points. But, diſtruſting their effect, he had begun to appropriate large revenues to the ſupport of the credit of paganiſm, againſt the influences of the charity of Chriſtians ‡‡. Nor were

* Luke x 30.—37. † Matth. xxv. 31.—46.

‡ Acts ii. 44. 45. iv. 32.—37.—xi. 27.—30. xxiv. 17. Rom. xv. 25, 26. 2 Cor. viii. 1.—4. ix. 1, 2.. Col. i. 4. 1 Theſſ. iv. 9. 2 Theſſ. i. 3. 1 Tim. v. 10. Philem. verſe 7. Rev. ii. 19. Clem. Rom. Eph. i. § 1, 2, 3.

§ Tert. Apol. c. 39, 42.

‖ Dionyſ. ap. Euſeb. H E. l. 4. c. 23. & l 7. c. 5.

¶ Dionyſ. ap. Euſeb. H. E. l. 7. c. 22. Cypr. Vit. per Pontium, p. 5.

** Euſeb. H. E. l. 9. c. 8.

†† De Morte Peregrini, p. 996, 997, 998. Ed Bourdelot. Par. 1615.

‡‡ Julian. Fragm. Ep. p. 290, 305. Ep. 49. p. 429. &c. Ed. Spanh. Lipſ. 1696. Greg. Nazianz. Orat. 3. p. 101, 102. Ed. Bilii. Par. 1630. Sozomen. Hiſt. Eccl. l. 5. c. 16.

theſe bountiful only to make and preſerve converts: for they continued ſo after their faith became the reigning one*. Then, for it was impracticable before, a vaſt variety of beneficent foundations, and, amongſt them, hoſpitals for the ſick, things unknown to preceeding ages †, roſe from the private liberalities of believers ‡, and were authoriſed and regulated by the civil power §, which have ſpread wherever the goſpel hath ſpread: and make one principal glory of our own church, our own times, and the reign of our gracious ſovereign. Theſe facts, I hope, will recommend, not only charity to Chriſtians, but Chriſtianity to charitable perſons: and ſhew the wiſdom of learning from ſcripture, the proper directions for carrying on the good work, which we are met to countenance.

Now there can be no better directions, than thoſe of the text. For it comprehends the three neceſſary points: a due proviſion, a vigilant ſuperintendence, a willing execution.

I. A due proviſion. *He that giveth, let him do it with ſimplicity:* fairly allowing every right motive its full effect upon him. The mere inſtinct of pity will operate irregularly, and ſometimes hurtfully. Mere worldly prudence will be generally miſled by preſent ſelf-intereſt. A ſenſe of moral fitneſs, without the ſanction of divine authority, will ſcarce ever produce much fruit, in common ſoils at leaſt. And the religion of reaſon alone, will but ſeldom furniſh precepts determinate enough, or excite hopes and fears powerful enough, to ſupply the deficiency. Doubtleſs we Chriſtians ought ſincerely to eſteem thoſe, who from any true principle, benefit their fellow-creatures: but at the ſame time, earneſtly to pray God, that he would make them *altogether ſuch as we are* ‖.

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* Chryſoſt. Hom. 66. in Matth. p. 658. Tom. 7. Ed. Montf.

† The word *Valetudinarium* is in ſeveral *Roman* authors; but ſeems to mean only a receptacle for the ſick ſervants of a family, in or near the houſe.

‡ *Jerom* ſaith, that *Fubiola*, a wealthy Chriſtian widow, of a noble *Roman* family, who died in his time, firſt erected a public infirmary; *prima omnium nostrae gentis instituit, in quo aegrotantes colligeret de plateis & consumpta languoribus atque inedia miserorum membra foveret.* Ep. 84. Ed. Bened. 77. Ed. Veron. And *Gregory the Preſbyter*, in his life of *Nazianzen*, ſaith, that *Baſil*, who lived in the ſame age with *Jerom*, built a large hoſpital for lepers, with charity money, which he collected for that purpoſe.

§ Cod. l. i. tit. 2. leg. 15, 19, 22. tit. 3. leg. 18.

‖ Acts xxvi. 29.

The goſpel weakens no other inducement: and adds ſuch perſuaſive ones of its own, that whoever embraces it *in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity* *, muſt be charitable. And hence I preſume it is, that the word, tranſlated *ſimplicity* in the text, ſignifies liberality, in ſeveral places of the New Teſtament †, and perhaps in no book written before it. For one, who is a Chriſtian *in ſingleneſs of heart* ‡, can neither covet immoderate wealth, nor hoard up againſt improbable accidents, nor make falſe pleas of inability, nor examine the merits of the diſtreſſed with rigour §, nor confine his alms to ſome favourite objects of beneficence; but will fairly conſider the claims of every different ſort. And none hath better, than this hoſpital, on various accounts.

It ſtands remote from others, in the neighbourhood of innumerable mariners and artificers, whom their manner of life ſubjects to many grievous caſualties and diſeaſes. Of theſe it takes care, if the caſe ſo require, (and there have been three hundred and thirty ſuch during the laſt year,) without any recommendation; but in all caſes, without any payment on their admiſſion, or any ſecurity for their burial, ſhould they die: which two demands, exclude the moſt helpleſs from other hoſpitals, and throw them on ours: but the advantage increaſes far beyond the expence.

Its ſupport hath always been from ſpontaneous gifts; and, within the compaſs of the annual account lately publiſhed, they have fallen ſhort of the diſburſements by three hundred and fifty pounds. Now it could not ſubſiſt, much leſs be enlarged as it ought, were this dimunition to continue. But, we truſt it is only temporary; proceeding from zeal to carry on with ſpeed a ſeparate, but important part of the general deſign. A new ſtructure, diſcreetly poſtponed at firſt, is now erecting, in a purer air, with larger and loftier rooms, yet wholy contrived for health, not ſhow, in which far greater numbers will be far better accommodated. And, indeed, the erection of it is a double charity, by employing the healthy poor

* 2 Cor. i. 12. † 2 Cor. viii. 2. ix. 11, 13. Jam. i. 5.

‡ Acts ii. 46. Eph. vi. 5. Col. iii. 22.

§ *Le Clerc* apprehends, that the apoſtle meant particularly to give this direction; which ſome of the early Chriſtians carried to a great length. See *the Shepherd of Hermas*, l. 2. mand. 2.

poor, as well as providing for the unhealthy. On this, near eighteen hundred pounds have been laid out, in the laſt twelve-month, more than hath been received in that time; and only two hundred and ninety-three remain in Bank. The friends to it, therefore, I hope, will not fail to conſider, that the ſooner it is finiſhed, the ſooner the money already expended on it, will become uſeful, and the charge of having two houſes at once will ceaſe. And ſuch, as were not friends to it, ought to conſider alſo, that, while others are contributing to the building, the fund for the patients will ſink, unleſs they ſupply the deficiency. When it is once completed, though larger donations will be wanted, than before it was begun, becauſe more perſons will be admitted than can now, yet, as the whole will be directly applied to their uſe, the benefit of the hoſpital, in proportion to the coſt, will be much more viſible, than it hath been hitherto.

II. The ſecond point is, a vigilant ſuperintendence, *He that ruleth, with diligence.*

Some of the governors, indeed, cannot be expected to attend, unleſs on occaſions very extraordinary. The mere honour of their names in the liſt of ſubſcribers will do great ſervice; and their occaſional recommendations and vindications of the charity, yet greater. But the aſſiſtance of able and experienced perſons, as viſitors, (an office to be faithfully diſcharged, when undertaken) and of conſiderable perſons alſo at the weekly and other boards, will be a meritorious addition to their contributions: and the more, as only the deſire of doing good, can render it agreeable to them. This will ſatisfy the world, that every thing goes on well. For good government is what diſtributes properly the nouriſhment that benefactions furniſh, and animates the whole machine; of which, care or neglect will wonderfully augment or fruſtrate the uſe. In a ſyſtem compounded of ſo many parts, precaution to obviate diſorders, or interpoſition to rectify them, muſt be continual. And where no poſitive faults appear, admirable improvements may be invented, or imported from other places. Indeed propoſals for that end, ſhould not be raſhly made, but very candidly conſidered, when they are made, and yet not overwarmly preſſed. For, if they are right, in time they will prevail. And eager contentions are ſolicitouſly to be avoided

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in all points, partialities of every ſort to be laid aſide; the advantage of the houſe to be ſolely kept in view, and even that purſued with gentleneſs, and the moſt obliging mutual regards. But though diſſention, like an acute diſtemper, threatens the moſt loudly, and brings on the ſuddeneſt danger; yet, if the criſis be favourable, all may be as well or better than before: but languid ſupineneſs is a chronicle diſeaſe, that proceeds with ſlow and ſilent, but ſurer ſteps, towards a diſſolution. The former happens oftener in the beginning of theſe undertakings; and I hope you are completly got over it, the later in the progreſs; of which therefore beware. Mark out and engage fit perſons to join with you, and ſucceed you, as acting governors; infuſe the ſpirit of right management into them, and inſtruct them in the fundamental articles of it.

One article, of almoſt unſpeakable moment, is cleanlineſs; which you have lately conſulted with much prudence, in providing change of freſh beds. But frequent renewal of freſh air, is found to be another indeſpenſible requiſite for the recovery, and even the preſervation of health, eſpecially when numbers are confined together in the ſame room. Yet few ſufficiently know this: and attendants, to ſave themſelves trouble, are unwilling to regard it; and the change muſt be made, in the caſe of the ſick, with no little caution. An excellent man *, who had long been an ornament to his profeſſion as a Clergyman, and to his country as a philoſopher, hath ſhewn the beſt means, as well as the neceſſity of making proviſion for this purpoſe; and will gladly give minuter directions, which may be of conſiderable benefit in your preſent houſe, and of much greater in fitting up your new one.

But there is another article, on which I muſt beg leave to enlarge a little more: that of religious worſhip and inſtruction. Prayers are read on two week-days, but they ſhould be read, and a ſermon preached, on the Lord's-day alſo; as, I believe, is done in every other hoſpital. The omiſſion will be interpreted, if continued, a ſlight on Chriſtianity, and cannot fail to grieve extremely all the pious part of the ſick; whereas, public devotions and exhortations then, will not only comfort theſe, but probably awaken many of the reſt to the reverence of

* Dr. *Stephen Hales*.

of the day, which, being their only one of leiſure, muſt be the beſt of their lives, or the worſt *. But bare general forms have often ſmall efficacy: and, therefore, a diſtinct perſonal application ought moreover to be made to each of them, not to fill their heads with empty words, or with idle, and much leſs with hurtful notions, but to excite in their ſouls a ſtrong and practical ſenſe, that he, from whom they are, and on whom they depend here and hereafter, hath ſent from heaven to *teach them, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, they ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works* †.

Theſe doctrines, propoſed to them compaſſionately and diſcreetly, when their condition permits them to reflect without hazard, will give to the well-diſpoſed inexpreſſible conſolation, and to the worſt no more than uſeful terror. A penitent conviction of their paſt ſins will inſtantly render them humble, contented, orderly, and obſervant in all reſpects: it muſt, if they die, have ſome good influence on their future ſtate, and may have the very beſt on many byſtanders. But if they recover, as eight in nine do, fixing it deeply in their hearts will prompt them to every thing right for themſelves, and all with whom they are concerned; will reſtrain them from every thing wrong, and make them happy under all reſtraints and all afflictions, by the aſſurance of an eternal recompence, which ineſtimable effects nothing elſe can have. Poſſibly ſcarce any principles of Chriſtianity or morality have ever been taught them; for, in this land of abuſed liberty, that is determined by chance, or arbitrary choice: poſſibly none ever will, unleſs it be here; and here they may be inculcated on them with peculiar advantage. They have leiſure to think; are kept cool and low; have not their vicious companions round them to deride ſerioufneſs, but fellow-ſufferers to applaud it: they experience the value of religion and virtue; for to theſe they owe the tender care that is taken

* On this admonition, the late Lord Viſcount *Folkeſtone* gave privately an allowance for performing the *Sunday* ſervice, till the hoſpital provided for it

† Tit. ii. 12, 13, 14.

ken of them. Pious books are read in the wards, by ſuch as can, to the reſt; which will be much better minded, after ſeparate exhortations made to each; and a ſmall gift of ſhort admonitory tracts, judiciouſly choſen for them when they go away, will tend very powerfully, through God's bleſſing, to perpetuate the impreſſions which they have received: at leaſt, we ſhall thus have tried what, even in worldly wiſdom, we ought. A conſiderable ſhare of the poverty and diſeaſes, and ſome ſhare of the accidents, that bring perſons to hoſpitals, ariſes from their wickedneſs; and therefore amending them is the way to prevent their return thither. Public wealth and ſtrength conſiſts partly in the numbers, partly in the uſefulneſs of the people. Now both will bear a near proportion to their morals; on which alſo the private ſecurity and domeſtic enjoyment of life almoſt entirely reſts. And many of the poor wretches cured, if they go away as vile as they come, will have cauſe to wiſh, with their families and the community, that their diſtempers had proved mortal. Even ſuppoſing men could be kept ſufficiently in order, againſt their judgments and wills, by dread of temporal puniſhments, their ſituation muſt be a very uneaſy one; whereas, thankful obedience to a juſt ruler, and gracious rewarder, is the moſt pleaſing motive imaginable. But evidently they cannot; nor any where ſo little, as where the limitation of the magiſtrate's authority by law is the ſtricteſt. And they muſt have a ſtrangely ſelf-denying zeal againſt religion, who had rather that thoſe about them ſhould deſpiſe it and be miſchievous, than revere it and be harmleſs.

Indeed the performance of all that I have been recommending, will require ſome addition of expence; but not much in compariſon, not more than is allowed elſewhere, not without receiving a valuable conſideration in return. Good perſons will contribute to it; will, if deſired, bear the whole of it; will be more liberal to the other parts of the charity for it; the reputation of the houſe will be heightened by it; which, I muſt tell you, ſuffers from delaying ſo neceſſary a proviſion.

I would only ſay further, on the ſecond head, that when patients are diſcharged, the good advice of the board, and of the governors who recommended them, may have vaſt weight with them, eſpecially if it be enforced by ſome aſſiſtance, ei-

ther from the common ſtock, or private liberality, for preſent ſupport, till they get ſtrength and buſineſs.

III. The third and laſt point is a willing execution. *He that ſheweth mercy, with cheerfulneſs.* For *ſhewing mercy* is underſtood by the beſt commentators * to ſignify here, what the like phraſe comprehends in the hiſtory of the benevolent *Samaritan* †, miniſtering perſonally to the objects of the charity; and *cheerfulneſs* ‡ denotes good will, both to them and to the employment. All depends at laſt on the care and kindneſs of thoſe who are engaged in this immediate application; in which they muſt indeed ſee melancholy and ſhocking ſights, and perform low and diſguſtful offices. But religion hath the ſecret to make every thing agreeable; and their occupations are ſo much more beneficial to mankind, and better fitted to improve their own hearts, than Providence hath allotted to moſt others, that they have cauſe on reflection to be ſatisfied, and even pleaſed, with their condition.

The general duty of all, who attend on this good work, is induſtriouſly to further, and in no reſpect to counteract the intent of it; to abſtain from provoking, diſcouraging, profane or immodeſt behaviour and diſcourſe; and to deter or diſſuade, ſo far as they can, every one concerned, from whatever is faulty. The particular duty of him who miniſters in holy things, hath been already intimated. Phyſicians and ſurgeons are habituated to humanity and decency; and will undoubtedly ſhew, and require that all under them ſhew, as much of it to theſe poor creatures as to their betters. The officers of the houſe muſt not only be upright, frugal, diligent, themſelves, but ſee both that inferior ſervants be aſſiduous and punctual, faithful and impartial, gentle and tender, which I underſtand is expreſsly charged on them, and likewiſe that the patients conform to the rules preſcribed them. Failures in the very loweſt part of the management, and that ſeem but ſmall, may be extremely hurtful to the ſick; and, though they are not, will be mentioned by them in ſtrong terms when they come out; and ſuch reports will reach their recommenders

* Ελεῶντας hic vocat, qui ægrotis aderant. GROT.

† Luke x. 37.

‡ Ιλαρότης hoc loco promptitudinem animi ſignificat. GROT.

recommenders and others, and in all likelihood be aggravated, to the unknown diſadvantage of the charity.

But the characters and conduct, both of the governors and of thoſe whom they intruſt, give ſuch aſſurance, that all is and will be carried on well, that I proceed, in concluſion, boldly to aſk your generous contributions to this excellent undertaking.

Moſt of the piteous objects, for whom it provides, become ſuch in working for you. Long voyages, or dangerous enterpriſes, or employments liable to miſchances, or labour on unwholeſome materials, or earneſt active induſtry, or cloſe confinement and ſedentary diligence, are the uſual cauſes of their ſufferings, and the principal ſources of our national riches and grandeur, of the conveniencies, and elegancies, and enjoyments of life: ſo that indeed they are martyrs to the public ſervice. And were it only to the public luxury, the fault would not be in them, but in you, their ſuperiors, who diſpoſe of them ſo; and who ought not ſurely to let them lie unrelieved in languiſhment or torture, for having furniſhed you the means of pomp and delicacy. If you do, you are ſadly unworthy of the kind providence which hath exalted you above them, to be its own ſtewards for their welfare.

But they are more directly the ſervants of you merchants and traders; to whom they are inſtruments of earning wealth and honours, for a bare ſubſiſtence. Think then, what you ſhould feel in their ſituation, were you neglected after all, when illneſs comes upon you. Think alſo, that induſtrious perſons are more in number for every one ſuch whoſe life is ſaved, or who is ſooner or more perfectly reſtored to health. Theſe conſiderations will clearly ſhew you, that all perſons of eminence in trade ſhould be liberal ſubſcribers, and the reſt occaſional, if they cannot be ſtated, benefactors. The preſent is one occaſion. The banker, or the box, or any friend of the hoſpital, will afford you other opportunities when you pleaſe. And you well know, that ſmall ſums frequently given, make a large total; beſides that even the widow's mite ſingly is precious in the ſight of God *.

* Mark xii. 41,—44.

Some, of various ranks, may not know objects enough for their charity; may not have leiſure or convenience to inquire after them; may not care to truſt or trouble others with doing it. Here then is a way open for ſuch to beſtow, unqueſtionably well, juſt as much as they wiſh; and they ſhould give the more, becauſe they are put to no difficulties, in order to give. Others have had ſervants, or dependents, or neighbours, under cure in the infirmary, of whom they would elſe have taken the charge themſelves. Now, theſe ought at leaſt to reimburſe the infirmary, for ſtill they will be gainers by it, but elſe they will in effect defraud it.

Perſons profeſſing religion cannot but be ſenſible, that were they to let unbelievers excel them in acts of bounty, it would afford them ſuch a triumph, as Heaven forbid they ſhould ever have. And perſons indifferent or unfavourable to religion, moſt of them profeſs the higheſt regard to benevolence; as indeed, if doing good to men be the only homage they will pay to God, ſurely they ought to be very abundant in it. We invite them, therefore, to a fair contention with us on this head. But at the ſame time, we muſt admoniſh them, that without moral ſelf-government, and dutiful piety, they will on the whole do harm to their fellow-creatures; or could that be otherwiſe, will fail of becoming inwardly ſuch as their all-wiſe Creator expects. And it is grievous to think, that with ſome qualities ſo amiable, by the wilful or careleſs neglect of the reſt, they ſhould deſerve condemnation inſtead of reward. Still *they ſhall obtain more mercy*, than if they had not been *merciful* *; and therefore, however wicked in other reſpects, it is highly their intereſt to be virtuous in this. But *charity ſhall cover a multitude of ſins* †, only when it proceeds from an efficacious reſolution of univerſal amendment: and then it is peculiarly both a proper thankful claim to God's promiſe of forgiveneſs, and likewiſe a proper compenſation to men for paſt injuries and omiſſions, if it be ſufficiently plentiful, and beſtowed on the ſufferers, when they can be found, or on the poor, as their ſubſtitutes, when they cannot. I hope, therefore, that every one here, whoſe conſcience tells him he hath offended againſt his brethren and his heavenly Father,

* Matth. v. 7. † 1 Pet. iv. 8.

Father, will take this method of reconciliation now without delay.

If deſire of increaſing your wealth obſtructs your liberality, you cannot, even in this world, receive near ſo much true ſatisfaction from having added a little to it, as from having done the great good which that little is capable of doing. Beſides, what is to become of your wealth? Your heirs are to have it. And how are they to employ it? If they are to perform acts of beneficence with it, why may not you as well? If they are only to go on augmenting it, where is the uſe or end of that? And if they are to ſquander it, as ſooner or later they will, you are only contriving to make yourſelf and them a reproach, in contrary ways.

Suppoſe then, on the other hand, it be pleaſures and amuſements that intercept your charity, of what kind are they? Many faſhionable ones are mean, irrational, deſtructive of the time, fortune, health, temper, principles, of thoſe who delight in them. What will be your credit and weight now, what the eſteem of your memory, and the ſtate of your poſterity, an age or two hence, if you live, and teach them to live, only or chiefly to ſuch things? At leaſt intermix with them ſomewhat worthy of notice and of praiſe. Retrench a ſin or a folly, and give the coſt to theſe poor creatures. Put out of your power, by ſpending well, what elſe you would have ſpent ill. This will be of double ſervice to you.

But poſſibly you devote the ſuperfluity of your income to innocent entertainments, ornaments, decorations. And is it fitting then, that you ſhould be humouring your fancy, or diſplaying your taſte, while wretches around you are periſhing and unaſſiſted? But ſuch things, you will ſay, employ the poor, and ſo do good. Why, allowing that they do good, which however is not true, without ſeveral exceptions, yet the poor, who are incapable of employment, ſhould be conſidered firſt. Others indeed *may* ſuffer, if you overlook them; but theſe *are* ſuffering. Others will make ſome ſhift, perhaps a better for the public, if not for themſelves too; but theſe can make none. Beſides, you may be a great deal ſurer, that the good to which ſelf-indulgence cannot prompt you, is meant for good; and it will procure you far more eſteem from the worthy and conſiderate. Some of the vain and thoughtleſs,

perhaps, may affect to ridicule you for it: but only avoid injudicious projects of beneficence, and degrees of liberality inconſiſtent with other obligations or properties, and you will be abundantly ſupported within and without. Private parſimony, when moderate, and combined with generoſity, in matters of public concern, was highly celebrated, even by Heathens, in former ages *; and will to the lateſt be an honour, and ſelfiſh pomp and luxury a diſgrace, to all nations and all perſons that are noted for either. The givers of memorable ſingle benefactions, indeed, will be longeſt and moſt extenſively reſpected; but ſuch as join with others, will alſo have praiſe for it, equal to their modeſt deſires. In our hoſpital particularly, their names and contributions are recorded, and openly propoſed for imitation; while yet they, who chooſe it, may be as ſecret in their donations to this charity as to any.

Poſſibly you may think it will be ſufficiently carried on without your help. But what if every body were to think ſo? Beſides, how do you know it will? And if it would, your concern is, not ſo much that good works be done, as that you do your ſhare towards them.

But you give to other charities, to other hoſpitals. And ſo do many of the bountiful friends to this. Why then may not, why then ſhould not, you be ſuch a friend to it likewiſe? But, at the very leaſt, be not an enemy. That we demand as juſtice. If we are wrong in any thing, we ſhall be glad to correct it; if deficient, to ſupply it. If we think we excel in any thing, we heartily wiſh we could excel in nothing. If we have chanced to take a name that may ſeem too lofty, we had rather never have taken it, than have given offence by what was intended not to arrogate the leaſt pre-eminence above our elder ſiſters, but only to expreſs, in the ſtrongeſt manner, how numerous the objects, for whom proviſion is wanted, were, and to whom we principally truſted for the means of relieving them.

Let us all, therefore, go on, amicably as well as diligently, in this and every method of leſſening miſery, and promoting goodneſs and happineſs, in the world, from an humble ſenſe of

* Cic. pro L. Flacco. § 12. Hor. Od. 2. 15. 10,—20. Sat. 2. 102,—105.

of duty to the Maker of it, till the exercise of the virtues, adapted to our present suffering state, improve our souls into a fitness for that approaching time of enjoyment; when *God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, or crying; neither shall there be any more pain.* *.

* Rev. xxi. 4.

SER.

SERMON CXXXVI.

(Preached in the Church of St. *Mary-le-Bone, December* 4. 1754. at the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Societies.)

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION REGULATED BY TIME, PLACE, AND CIRCUMSTANCES, AN EVIDENCE OF THE GENERAL CHRISTIAN TEMPER AND SPIRIT.

MALACHI iii. 16.

Then they, that feared the Lord, ſpoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

THIS prophecy was delivered long after the return of the *Jews* from *Babylon*; when they had ceaſed in general to be ſuperſtitious and idolatrous, for it ſcarce accuſes them once of either ſin, but were falling into the oppoſite extreme of indifference about all religion. Many of the prieſts themſelves performed their functions carelefsly and contemptuouſly, from a principle of mere worldly intereſt *; and either neglected to inſtruct others, or miſled them †. The people, partly, without queſtion, in conſequence of this, were deſtitute of zeal for God's worſhip, *ſaid it was a wearineſs and ſnuffed at it*; ſacrificed to him the refuſe of their cattle, ‡, *robbed him in tithes and offerings* §, married heathens without ſcruple ‖, broke their marriage vows by adultery ¶, *dealt treacherouſly every man againſt*

* Mal. i. 6, 7, 10. † ii. 7, 8. ‡ i. 13, 14.
§ iii. 8, &c. ‖ ii. 11. ¶ ii. 10.

againſt his brother *, were guilty of oppreſſion and perjury †; for the prophet expreſsly charges them with all theſe crimes. And he adds, that they not only indulged, but applauded themſelves in impiety and immorality; caſting off with ſcorn the ſerious regard, which they had formerly paid to unpleaſing rules of duty; and declaring thoſe, who had fearleſsly broke through them, the only wiſe perſons. *Your words have been ſtout againſt me, ſaith the Lord. Ye have ſaid, it is vain to ſerve God, and, what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully, before the Lord of Hoſts? And now we call the proud, happy; yea, they that work wickedneſs are ſet up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered* ‡. So that they ſtill ſeem to have profeſſed ſome belief in a ſort of deity; but at the ſame time prevailed on themſelves to fancy, that he was unconcerned about their treatment of himſelf, or each other.

How lively a picture this is, though drawn above two thouſand years ago, of the free-livers and free-thinkers, as they have been called, of our own age, and how large and increaſing the numbers of them are, I need not ſay; their practices, their diſcourſe, their writings, ſhew it too plainly. The queſtion is, while they behave thus, what ſhould our behaviour be?

Now, undoubtedly earneſt endeavours ought to be uſed for reclaiming them. And ſuch as are qualified for this employment, eſpecially if they are likewiſe peculiarly called to it, ſhould be conſcientiouſly diligent in it; labouring to convince both the avowedly profane and vicious, and all who lean towards them, of the unreaſonableneſs and final uncomfortableneſs of their notions, the abſurd raſhneſs of their talk, the ruinous tendency of their conduct, even in this life, to themſelves, to ſuch as are moſt dearly connected with them, and to the public; but above all, of the certain future miſery, which they muſt bring on their own heads, if the maker of the world govern it with juſtice or wiſdom, or indeed with real goodneſs to the whole; and for what other ends he could poſſibly create it, is utterly inconceivable.

* Mal. ii. 10. † iii. 5. ‡ iii. 13. 14. 15.

But though every perſon of plain underſtanding, and upupright heart, is capable of ſeeing theſe things; and moſt may repreſent them with good effect, to ſuch as err through inconſiderateneſs or ſuggeſtions only, yet many are not capable of debating them with acute and artful opponents; or if they were, ſtill would not be a match, on other accounts, for the bold and overbearing, the contemptuous and ridiculing. Whatever cauſe a modeſt man, of common parts and attainments, were to maintain againſt ſuch, the combat would be unequal, and therefore is better avoided by him. But ſuppoſing him ever ſo accompliſhed; what ſucceſs can be expected againſt ſcornful levity, conceited ſelf-ſufficiency, hardened unfairneſs, or ſtupid ſenſuality; againſt thoſe, who, as the Apoſtle admirably deſcribes them, *walk in the vanity of their mind, having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts; who, being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over unto laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs* *. Probably formal oppoſition would only provoke ſuch to more ſhocking expreſſions of irreligion at the time, and greater miſchievouſneſs afterwards. Therefore *Solomon*'s general maxim and direction is: *He that reproveth a ſcorner getteth to himſelf ſhame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himſelf a blot. Reprove not a ſcorner, leſt he hate thee; rebuke a wiſe man, and he will love thee* †.

Still they, to whoſe province it belongs, muſt, while there is any view of ſucceſs, *inſtruct thoſe who oppoſe themſelves* ‡, *reprove, rebuke* §, *exhort with all authority* ‖. And others muſt never even ſeem to countenance licentious talk, and to give up the cauſe of religion when attacked; but *walk in wiſdom toward them that are without*, that is, towards unbelievers; take care that *their ſpeech be always with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt* ¶; becoming, inoffenſive, diſcreet; and that they *be ready alway to give an anſwer to every man, that aſketh them a reaſon of the hope that is in them* **. But uſually it will be moſt adviſeable, on all ſuch occaſions, to ſpeak briefly; and in ſo mild a manner, that the party concerned, may not think

* Eph. iv. 17, 18, 19. † Prov. ix. 7, 8. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 25.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 2. ‖ Tit. ii. 15. ¶ Col. iv. 5, 6.
** 1 Pet. iii. 15.

think himſelf challenged to attempt a reply; yet in ſo home a one, that he may feel inwardly, and, if poſſible, alſo laſtingly, the force of what is ſaid to him; which he will oftener do, than he will care to own it. For *the words of the wiſe, are as goads, and as nails faſtened* *. Excepting what this act of charity may require, we ſhall do well to *keep our mouths as it were with a bridle, while the ungodly is in our ſight*; not diſagreeably abſtaining from all converſation, but ſtudiouſly from all which they can be likely to pervert; *keeping ſilence*, where there is danger of that, *even from good words* †; *and not caſting their pearls before ſwine, leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend* ‡ the well-meaning giver.

The duty therefore of the generality of Chriſtians, in regard to the enemies of their faith and practice, beſides pitying them and praying for them, goes little further, than firſt ſecuring themſelves, and thoſe who belong to them, from the contagion; and determining with *Joſhua*, that let others *ſerve whom* or what *they chooſe, they and their houſes will ſerve the Lord* §: then, as opportunity may offer, *ſtrengthening the* reſt of their *brethren* ‖, and uſing the means of being mutually ſtrengthened by them, in the ſame reſolution.

This method, we find, the pious and virtuous took in the days of *Malachi*. Doubtleſs the faithful *prieſts and meſſengers of the Lord of Hoſts*, whoſe *lips* were to *keep knowledge* ¶, uttered it alſo: *lifted up their voices like trumpets*, to *ſhew the people their tranſgreſſion, and the houſe of Jacob their ſins* **. But of the bulk of believers, we read, not that they were forward to diſpute, indeed we may be ſure they were backward to intermix, with unbelievers; but only, that *they, who feared the Lord, ſpake often to one another*, certainly of things relating to his fear; *and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of rememberance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.*

Now in theſe words we have it plainly ſignified to us,

I. That ſerious conference amongſt good perſons, is peculiarly needful in thoughtleſs and irreligious times.

* Eccleſ. xii. 11. † Pſ. xxxix. 2, 3. ‡ Matth. vii. 6.
§ Joſh. xxiv. 15. ‖ Luke xxii. 32. ¶ Mal. ii. 7.
** Iſ. lviii. 1.

II. That God obſerves and remembers, and will reward the proper uſe of it.

Theſe therefore, ſhall be the two firſt heads of my diſcourſe: and then,

III. I ſhall apply them to the preſent occaſion.

I. That ſerious conference amongſt good perſons is peculiarly needful in thoughtleſs and irreligious times.

Indeed we ought in all times to ſhew, by our converſation, what we are, and ſhall, in ſome degree, ſhew it of courſe, whether we mean to do ſo or not. If we expreſs no concern for the intereſts of piety and virtue in our words, we ſhall be juſtly ſuſpected of having but little in our thoughts. *For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh. A good man, out of the good treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treaſure, bringeth forth evil things* *. Therefore, as it concerns us infinitely to know, of what ſort of perſons we are, ſo we ſhould learn to judge of ourſelves by our common talk, as well as our actions. For as *the fruit declareth, if the tree have been dreſſed, ſo is the utterance of a conception in the heart of man* †. If then the conceptions which we utter, the ſort of language into which we naturally run, be, though not profane or immoral, yet frothy and vain and trifling; or, though of a graver kind, ſavours of the intereſts of this world only; let us take notice, that ſuch as are the ſubjects that we dwell on, ſuch, in all likelihood, are we. For in caſes of much leſs moment, we are ſufficiently apt to ſpeak of things, about which we are ſolicitous; and is it not a very unpromiſing ſign then, if we ſeldom or never ſpeak any thing, which proves our ſolicitude for religion and morals? Poſſibly indeed the prevalence of bad cuſtom in that reſpect, or fear to be thought guilty of affectation, may reſtrain us from expreſſing our ſentiments, when we could wiſh to do it. And, in the caſe of others, we ſhould be as ready to allow this excuſe, as there is any colour of reaſon. But in our own, we ſhould examine ſtrictly, what the real truth is: and amend our manner of converſing, for a memorial to amend likewiſe, if there be need, our inward diſpoſitions.

By

* Matth. xii. 34, 35. † Eccluſ. xxvii. 6.

By ſpeaking ſeriouſly on proper occaſions, we ſhall bind ourſelves to act ſo, elſe the inconſiſtence will ſhame us. And beſides, as we are ſtrangely apt to grow languid and flat in our good inclinations, it is of vaſt importance, that we ſhould ſtir up each other, which a word in ſeaſon, or a mere hint, will often do ſurpriſingly. *Iron ſharpeneth iron*, ſaith the wiſe king; *ſo a man ſharpeneth the countenance of his friend* *; whets him up to attempt improvements, and execute right purpoſes. In whatever we ſet to learn, partnerſhip, joint advice, mutual incitement, imitation, emulation, if there be room for it, have unſpeakable force. Now we are moſt of us, God knows, but learners in piety, and perpetually in danger of going back. Therefore the ſcripture directs us to *conſider one another, to provoke to love and good works, to exhort one another*, as powerful means of *holding faſt our faith* and integrity *without wavering* †. So that we have not only reaſon, but command for the practice, which will be ſtill farther uſeful, by giving us caution and ſkill, as well as courage and ſpirit. The ſnares of wicked perſons are many and artful, but the counſel of worthy and experienced friends, may guard us even againſt the moſt dangerous of them. The temptations of the wicked one, ſurround us continually; but communication with thoſe, who *are not ignorant of his devices* ‡, may effectually prevent his getting advantage of us. Even general diſcourſe with ſuch, though we do not open ourſelves to them by particular confidences, may be extremely beneficial to us, and eſpecial truſt repoſed in them, on extraordinary occaſions, with proportionable circumſpection, may be yet more eſſentially ſerviceable.

But even where we can receive little inſtruction, we may enjoy, however, great ſatisfaction, from intimacy of acquaintance with *them who have obtained the like precious faith with ourſelves* §; who think, and act, and hope, and expect, as we do; for uniting in friendſhip with thoſe now, whom God, we truſt, will unite with us in heavenly bliſs to all eternity. We ſhall be far ſurer of finding theſe, upright, unenvious, conſiderate, benevolent, compaſſionate, than others, who have not equal inducements, we ſhall be able to converſe with them more

* Prov. xxvii. 17.
† Heb. x. 23, 24, 25.
‡ 2 Cor. ii. 11.
§ 2 Pet. i. 2.

more frankly and open heartedly, as agreeing in our ſentiments of the principal points, and depending on their candour where we differ, we ſhall have the pleaſure of eſteeming each others characters, and rejoice in the conſideration, that we place our chief regard on thoſe, whom our Maker honours with his. What if they have ſome faults or indiſcretions? Who elſe have ſo few, or ſo ſmall? What if perhaps, they are ſome of them not in all reſpects, the moſt entertaining; the worthineſs of their hearts, will, or ought, to give us a higher pleaſure, than the brighteſt of other accompliſhments without it. What if they have not, all of them, the greateſt compaſs of ſcience, or ſtrength of parts, or knowledge of the world? They are infinitely wiſer in the neceſſary points, than multitudes who have. What if they cannot promote our temporal views? They will never betray us, they will never injure us; they will always forward us in the way to eternal happineſs. Keeping at a diſtance from ſuch as theſe, who, we muſt be ſenſible, merit other treatment; and paying court to perſons of bad or no principles, and blameable lives, for the ſuperficial agreeableneſs, or miſuſed abilities that they have, for the gay appearence they make, or the little preſent ſervices which they can do us, is ſo inequitable in itſelf, and ſo grievouſly and evidently prejudical to the cauſe of religion and probity, and common good, that they who indulge themſelves in it, have great need to ſuſpect the rightneſs of their own minds, and to apprehend imminent danger of their being further depraved. There is indeed a variety of connections in human affairs, that may often prevent us from taking the different notices of different characters, which are their due; but unleſs we honeſtly endeavour it, and contrive for it, as far as we can, and lament, not in words of form and excuſe now and then, but from the bottom of our hearts conſtantly, that we cannot do it more; we are either bad perſons within, or very imperfectly good. With whom then, let us aſk ourſelves, do we love to aſſociate, and what familiarities do we chooſe; can we ſay, if not, will we qualify ourſelves for ſaying, with the pſalmiſt: *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and keep thy commandments* *. *My delight is upon the ſaints, that are in the earth, and upon ſuch as excel in virtue* †.

But

* Pſ. cxix 63. † Pſ. xvi. 3.

But converſing with religious people, is peculiarly requiſite in irreligious times; when *the godly man ceaſeth*, when *the faithful fail from among the children of men* *. In proportion as the number becomes ſmaller, it naturally invites, to make the union ſtricter, on various accounts. Prevailing neglect of God and his commands, can hardly fail to excite anger in pious breaſts; but grief it muſt cauſe. *Rivers of water run down mine eyes, becauſe men keep not thy law* †. Now both indignation and ſorrow, require vent. Do we then feel neither on this occaſion; or if we do, to whom ſhall we give them vent, but to ſuch as will cordially ſympathize with us; or, if we want not their acquaintance for any ſuch reaſon, we may for another, that is more important. Our Saviour hath forewarned us, that *becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall wax cold* ‡. Were only thoſe around us in this danger, we ſhould labour to prevent it; but we ourſelves run, it may be an equal riſk of declining, firſt into lukewarmneſs, then into doubt, then into apoſtacy. Therefore St. *Paul* directs to the ſame remedy with that in the text, as a ſovereign and ſpecific antidote. *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin* §. Some ſociety we muſt have. By ſeeking that of good perſons, we ſhall have leſs need to ſpend much of our time with the bad; and be leſs hurt by that portion which we are obliged to give up to them. They will not ſo readily dare to tempt us: mere good breeding will be one good check upon them, when they perceive, by the company we keep, and the tenor of our common ſpeech agreeing with it, that we have made a Chriſtian life our deliberate choice. And this will be a vaſt ſecurity, and eaſe to us. It is, in effect, ſaying, though meekly and modeſtly, yet ſo as will awe the generality of the world, *away from me, ye wicked; I will keep the commandments of my God* ‖.

Indeed ſuch declarations, what ſide we are of, by proper expreſſions prudently introduced, and acquaintances diſcreetly made, will not only reſtrain ſinners from wounding our ears, with profane or licentious talk, which will at the ſame time, be

* Pſ. xii. 1. † Pſ. cxix. 136. ‡ Matth. xxiv. 12.
§ Heb. iii. 12, 13. ‖ Pſ. cxix. 115.

be ſome diminution of their guilt, but muſt, if they have any reflection and diffidence, excite in them ſtrong ſuſpicions, which, through God's bleſſing, may improve into full perſuaſion, that the doctrines and the precepts, which they have ſlighted, and we reverence, are awful realities. At leaſt it will greatly comfort all, who are engaged in the ſame cauſe with us; contribute much to preſerve the wavering, and ſingularly animate the well-diſpoſed, but timorous and diſtruſtful of their own judgments; to find, from the open and joint profeſſions of good perſons, that more ſuch are left, than they imagined. The wretches, who *go about ſeeking whom they may devour* *, endeavour to perſuade them, that there are few or none. Let us ſhew them the contrary; and where they are to be met with, and that they are ſufficiently united, as well as numerous, to be a ſhelter and a refuge; conviace them, that if, by adhering to their duty, they loſe the good opinion, ſuch as it is, of ſome, they ſhall gain the much more valuable eſteem of others; offer them our ſupport and friendſhip, our advice and aſſiſtance. We are apt to be extremely zealous in patronizing the ſeveral parties that we form about other affairs, often exceſſively trifling ones; in ſecuring perſons to our ſide, in guarding them againſt contrary impreſſions. And can it be right, can it poſſibly conſiſt with true piety, that we ſhould have no zeal, or next to none, for the greateſt of all concerns; for the honour of our heavenly Father, our bleſſed Redeemer, our gracious Sanctifier, for the preſent and future felicity of mankind?

But further; even to the moſt zealous, free and friendly diſcourſe, with their well-wiſhers, and fellow labourers, may be of a ſingular benefit, by procuring advice, how to conduct and moderate their zeal; which elſe may prompt them, and young minds eſpecially, to overleap the bounds of diſcretion; to make attempts without likelihood of ſucceſs, give advantages to adverſaries, and bring ſhame on their own heads; the conſciouſneſs of which perhaps, may drive them from their firſt extreme, to the oppoſite and much worſe. Here then particularly, but in many other caſes too, they *who fear the Lord* may, by mutual communication, help each other to preſerve at once *the harmleſſneſs of the dove, and the wiſdom of the ſerpent* †.

I:

* 1 Pet. v. 8. † Matth. x. 16.

It is not by any means neceſſary to theſe valuable ends, that the whole converſation of religious perſons, when they are together, be on the ſubject of religion. The bare choice of ſuch company and acquaintance is, of itſelf, a mutual incitement to perſevere and be active. Their diſcourſe on every ſubject will be regulated by the laws of religion; the truth and importance of it, will be ſuppoſed in all they ſay; and on occaſion will be aſſerted, and ſhewn more directly. When it is proper, they will congratulate one another on the happy ſtate, to which they have attained through him, *who gave himſelf for our ſins, that he might deliver us from this preſent evil world* *; they will animate one another to *go on their way rejoicing* †; they will *comfort one another* ‡, with Chriſtian conſiderations, under difficulties and afflictions. The introduction indeed of pious phraſes, or even ſentiments, out of time and place, will be avoided, as improper and diſguſting, inſtead of ſerviceable. But ſtill, while we converſe together ſo freely, on every thing beſides, we need not ſurely be ſo extremely ſhy, as we commonly are, on the head of religion. It is true, the name of it ſhould not be profaned, any more than that of its author, by irreverent vulgar uſe; but to exclude and baniſh it under colour of reſpect, can never be fitting. It is a ſadly falſe delicacy, if we behave thus from reverence to it; and a lamentable mean ſpiritedneſs, if we forbear to mention it from fear or ſhame. One would not be unſeaſonable or ſuperfluous in profeſſions of loyalty, of friendſhip, of any thing; but one would not be defective neither, and bring one's ſelf into ſuſpicion, and one's friends under diſcouragements. The ſame then, is the rule concerning piety; and expreſſing ourſelves openly in its favour, whenever opportunity requires or invites, is no more than acting in character. Vicious and impious creatures, boldly ſhew themſelves in their characters. *They corrupt others*, as the Pſalmiſt obſerves, (indeed who can help obſerving it?) *and ſpeak of wicked blaſphemy: Their talking is againſt the Moſt High. They ſtretch forth their mouth unto heaven; and their tongue goeth through the world. Therefore fall the people unto them*, taking their confident aſſertions for marks of ſuperior knowledge; *and thereout ſuck they no ſmall advantage* §: Advan-

* Gal. i. 4. † Acts viii. 39. ‡ 1 Theſſ. iv. 18.
§ Pſ. lxxiii. 8, 9, 10.

tage to their cauſe at leaſt, but often to their perſonal intereſts alſo; which no men are more given to purſue, by all methods, direct or indirect. And what ſhould keep us, who have an infinitely better cauſe, and that ſupported too, by public authority, from avowing it in oppoſition to them, eſpecially along with thoſe, who will join us in ſupporting it? Bad people cannot have one motive for their zeal, which we have for ours, and it is the ſtrongeſt poſſible; that I mean, which the text mentions.

II. That God obſerves, and will reward it. *The Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him.*

He hears indeed every thing, and can forget nothing. But the prophet means, that he takes a gracious notice, of this particularly, amongſt other good actions of his ſervants and will as certainly recompenſe, in the preſent life, if it ſuit the other purpoſes of infinite wiſdom, but however in the next, their conſultations and declarations for the promotion of his honour, as if they were all regiſtered in a book, that lay continually open before him *. The world is apt to pay no attention, or a very ſhort-lived one, to the uſefulleſt labours of the beſt Chriſtians. Many are condemned by their example, and occaſionally too thwarted by their behaviour; nay, ſome perhaps, envy their preſent comfort of mind, and proſpect of future happineſs. Therefore they ſpeak of them with ſeverity or ſcorn, bear hard upon them, try to ſet others againſt them; while, towards people of known bad principles and morals, they are all indulgence and charity. Mutual conference and counſel, amongſt ſerious perſons, will conſiderably help them to ſupport ſuch treatment. Yet ſtill their ſituation, will often be a diſconſolate and melancholy one, were their only reſource in themſelves and this life. But the reflection, that they act under the eye of God, ſhall be directed and owned by him; the right which they have, of ſaying to their own hearts, and to each other, what our Saviour ſaid to his diſciples, whom *he ſent forth as ſheep amongſt wolves* †, *fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleaſure, to give you the kingdom* ‡: this alters the view of things totally. Unpromiſing as preſent

* Pſ. lvi. 8. † Matth. x. 16. Luke x. 3. ‡ Luke xii. 32.

ſent appearances are, *the kingdoms of this world, ſhall be the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt**, both of profeſſion and practice, far more fully than any one of them hath been yet; and how great muſt be the honour and the joy of having contributed to this bleſſed change! We indeed ſhall probably never ſee it here; but we ſhall look down upon it with rapture from above. And while we remain below, how reviving is the aſſurance, *ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs*, cultivate faithful obedience to him, in your own breaſts, in as many more as you can; *and all other things ſhall be added unto you* †: Such proportions of every worldly advantage, as will prove really beneficial. And be they more or leſs, they will be enjoyed with ſingular ſatisfaction, as gifts of his love. But more eſpecially ſuch may hope to eſcape better than others, in times of general viſitation and puniſhment; as himſelf intimates in the verſe after the text. *They ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, in the day, when I make up my jewels*; or, as it rather ſhould be tranſlated, *they ſhould be jewels*, or *a peculiar treaſure to me*, preſerved with uncommon care, *in the day that I make*, or *appoint*; *and I will ſpare them, as a man ſpareth his own ſon, that ſerveth him.*

Perſons may indeed, by concealing to which ſide they belong, eſcape ſome little perſecutions, and ſecure ſome little intereſts; and entitle themſelves to ſome favourable diſtinctions from the worthleſs, of which laſt many ſeem extremely ambitious. But while the diſpoſer of all things *gives them their deſire* in theſe reſpects, *he ſends leanneſs withal into their ſouls* ‡. Either they pine away with ſecret conſciouſneſs, that they act a mean part; and feel their ſenſe of duty grow languid for want of exerting it; or if they decline without perceiving the decay, their ſtate is the more dangerous and hopeleſs. Acknowledgment of God, is as neceſſary to our acceptance, as faith in him. For St. *Paul* hath told us, that as *with the heart, man believeth unto righteouſneſs*, ſo *with the mouth, confeſſion is made unto ſalvation* §. And St. *John* hath ranked together in future puniſhment, *the fearful* with the *unbelieving* ||. Nay, our Saviour's own declaration; which cannot be too often brought to mind, is, *Whoever ſhall be aſhamed of*

* Rev. xi. 15. † Matth. vi. 33. Luke xii. 31. ‡ Pſ. cvi. 15.
§ Rom. x. 10. || Rev. xxi. 8.

me, and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful generation, of him alſo, ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels *.

Our religion then, is not to be deſſembled, but avowed. *He, that is not* openly *with Chriſt, is againſt him* †; diſobeys his directions, and fruſtrates, as far as he can, a valuable part of his deſign. But they, who aſſiſt his followers to ſupport his cauſe, though wicked or thoughtleſs *men revile them* for it, are expreſsly aſſured, that *great is their reward in heaven* ‡: always provided, that the reſt of their character and conduct, be ſuitable to this part. For ſcripture promiſes, made to one duty, muſt ever be underſtood on ſuppoſition of its being performed from ſuch principles, as will effectually influence us to obſerve every duty. And then, the more we abound in this particularly, the ampler will be our recompence.

Now therefore I proceed,

III. To apply what hath been ſaid, to the preſent occaſion.

Beneficial as pious diſcourſe and conſultation is in general, the benefit may both be increaſed to ourſelves, and other ſerious believers, and extended further amongſt the vicious and inconſiderate, by our uniting into regular ſocieties, for the more conſtant intercourſe of mutual edification, and ſupport of religious behaviour. In theſe, the knot of virtuous friendſhip is drawn cloſer; each member of them, is by the reſt warmed into greater earneſtneſs, furniſhed with fuller advice, bound to ſtricter circumſpection. They are ſhelters and protections, to which the weak may fly; they are *cities*, though ſmall, *ſet on a hill*, to attract the obſervation, and direct the ſteps of travellers; they are *lights* ſhining in *the world*, to ſhew men the path of life §. Such indeed principally are the more public *aſſemblies* of Chriſtians, which true Chriſtians will on no account ever *forſake*; though it be *the manner of ſome* ||, indeed of many in our days, who yet retain the name, to ſlight them, in direct oppoſition both to ſcripture and reaſon. But going to church at the appointed times, hath been repreſented as a thing, which people do thoughtleſsly and of courſe, or to avoid cenſure; whereas voluntary ſocieties, like yours,

* Mark viii. 38. † Matth. xii. 30. Luke xi. 23.
‡ Mark v. 11, 12. Luke vi. 22, 23. § Matth. v. 14.
|| Heb. x. 25.

yours, cannot be under that imputation. Joining in them proceeds plainly from deliberate choice: and proclaims very ſeaſonably in a degenerate age, a ſenſe of duty, which may, through God's bleſſing, have excellent effects. Indeed, were this method recommended no other way, the practice of our adverſaries might teach it us. Unbelievers have their infidel clubs; nay, turn into ſuch, as far as they can, every ſort of meeting for every other purpoſe. Thus they ſtrengthen each others hands in impiety; and ſurely then we ſhould aſſociate to *build up* each other *in our holy faith* *. Not that you are to condemn thoſe, who do not in form become members of your ſocieties. They may have reaſons, with which you are unacquainted, they may do what is equivalent in ſome other way; they may judge ill in this particular, and yet mean and act well in the main. But ſtill, joining more viſibly and profeſſedly in the work of the Lord, as you do, may be of ſingular ſervice to yourſelves and others.

Nor can it be doubted, but theſe ſocieties, in the many years which they have ſubſiſted, have preſerved and reclaimed from ſin, improved and ripened in goodneſs, great multitudes of ſouls; a praiſe infinitely ſuperior to all that any other combinations can claim, which are inſtituted for worldly pleaſure or profit; and, without much caution, may divert the attention to wrong matters, or fix it on ſuch as are comparatively trifles; whereas yours points it directly to the *one thing needful* †. Long practice and trial hath taught you, what regulations are moſt proper to avoid inconveniences; and attain the excellent ends which you propoſe. Indeed the printed orders of one of your aſſembles, which I take for granted the reſt have in ſubſtance, are ſo perfectly right and wiſe, that you need but little more direction, than often to read them carefully over, and keep up to the ſpirit of them.

Merely paying a perſonal attendance at your ſocieties, and joining with it a decent deportment in common life, though it may be an example of ſome ſpiritual uſe to others, will be of little more than worldly benefit to yourſelves; indeed will deceive you fatally, if you reſt in it. For a bare outſide profeſſion is nothing, is hypocriſy. Nay, though you practiſe from

* Jude, Verſe 20. † Luke x. 42.

from an inward principle of conſcience ever ſo many human virtues, but without regard to God, you are only moral, not pious men. Nay further, if you alſo worſhip and honour him, and think that by this you merit favour and reward from him, you are miſerably ignorant of his holineſs, and your own ſinful imperfections. Or even ſhould you go yet another ſtep, and truſt, not in your good works, but in his mercy, as diſcoverable by the light of reaſon only; that can never ſhew you certainly, whether, and in what degree, his mercy will extend to you; and though *not far from the kingdom of God* *, you ſtill want one thing before you can enter into it, faith in his mercy, as purchaſed by the blood, and offered by the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. Numbers, alas! in our days have wholly, or in part, ſlighted and caſt off his goſpel. But inſtead of following them, remember the ſaying of St. *Peter* when *many of his diſciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto the twelve, will you alſo go away? Then Simon Peter anſwered him; Lord, to whom ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life* †. If you once leave the revealed will of God; what you are to do, will often be matter of doubt; but how you ſhall be able to do it, and what you are to hope or to fear, after doing ſo rightly, and ſo much amiſs, will be always uncertain. And in theſe circumſtances, worldly intereſt, or ſenſuality, or vanity, will ſoon tempt you, as too frequent experience hath proved, firſt to live wickedly, then to diſbelieve a future recompence. Therefore if you love your ſouls, if indeed you would preſerve any ſenſe of religion at all, ſtand faſt in the faith of your bleſſed Redeemer. Very poſſibly you may hear not only jeſts thrown upon it, which deſerve nothing more than contempt and abhorrence, but ſeeming or real difficulties raiſed in relation to it, and ſhrewd objections urged againſt ſuch a doctrine or ſuch a text, or ſuch a fact. Qualify yourſelves to anſwer them, if you can; for anſwers to them all there are. But if you cannot; rely ſecurely, as you well may, on the accumulated evidence of innumerable miracles performed and prophecies fulfilled, the ſublimity and purity of the doctrine, the incomparable excellence of the character of Chriſt, the diſintereſted ſufferings of his firſt followers,

* Mark xii. 34. † John vi. 66, 67, 68.

followers, the glorious prevalence of his goſpel againſt all oppoſition, the divine efficacy of it on the hearts of men. Theſe are general, obvious, irrefragable proofs of the whole of Chriſtianity at once; ſufficient to outweigh ten thouſand exceptions to particular parts.

Being convinced then that you ought to receive the goſpel of Chriſt, receive it in ſimplicity, *as the truth is in Jeſus* *; believe in him as *God manifeſt in the fleſh* †; believe in the atonement of his death, the neceſſity of the grace of his Spirit, the efficacy of his inſtitutions; and that with ſuch a faith, as will equally prompt you to pray for pardon and help, and to *cleanſe yourſelves*, by means of the aſſiſtance granted you, *from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God* ‡.

From this faith will ariſe comfortable hope, which differs only in degree from joyful aſſurance, of being in a ſtate of acceptance and ſalvation. But the ſcripture hath not taught us, nor is it ſafe, to judge of our ſpiritual condition by any ſuch delightful feeling, inſtantaneouſly impreſſed upon us; for the preſumptuous ſinner may work himſelf into the imagination of it, and the modeſt and humble ſaint experience it much leſs ſtrongly: but the rule is, to *know* ourſelves, as well as others, *by our fruits* §. If our *faith work by love* ‖; love of God, love of our neighbour, love of goodneſs and of heaven, all is well. In theſe, therefore, exerciſe yourſelves, *to make your calling and election ſure*, and your ſocieties reſpectable; *for if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall* ¶.

Each of you then be careful ſeparately to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things* **. *Abſtain*, not only *from* all evil, but *all appearance of evil* ††, leſt *the name of God be blaſphemed through you among the Gentiles* ‡‡. *Be not conformed to this world* §§ in any thing ſinful, enſnaring, ſuſpicious; for ſuch many of the cuſtoms of this world are. Avoid unbecoming levities in diſcourſe; indulgence to the full, or delicacy, in meats and drinks; vain ſhew and expence in apparel; amuſements of bad report or bad example; form your

* Eph. iv. 21. † 1 Tim. iii. 16. ‡ 2 Cor. vii. 1.
§ Matth. vii. 16, &c. ‖ Gal. v. 6. ¶ 2 Pet. i. 10.
** Tit. ii. 10. †† 1 Theſſ. v. 22. ‡‡ Rom. ii. 24.
§§ Rom. xii. 2.

your families, as well as yourſelves, to *ſeek and ſet their affections, not on things on the earth, but things above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God* *. Yet at the ſame time recommend your ſerioufneſs by as eaſy and cheerful a deportment as you can; be *gentle* †, *be courteous* ‡; excuſe yourſelves with civility from what you cannot approve; cenſure no liberties that are innocent; and with moderation join gracefully, if poſſible, in all harmleſs things, to which propriety invites you. In your dealings and buſineſs, be juſt, ſincere, equitable, compaſſionate; for it is a dreadful prejudice againſt the goſpel, when they, who diſtinguiſh themſelves in the profeſſion of it, are thought unfair, indirect, unreaſonable, hard-hearted. Be alſo diligent in your vocations, frugal, prudent; for theſe alſo are Chriſtian duties: and if, for want of obſerving them, you fail to thrive tolerably well in the world, all will be imputed to your expence of time, and thought, and money, on your religious meetings and ſchemes. Beſides, you ought both to *labour* and be ſaving, *that you may have to give to him that needeth* §. Infidels are apt to boaſt of their charity and good-nature; and it concerns us highly not to let them be ſuperior to us in any branch of our Saviour's *new commandment*, univerſal *love* ‖; but exerciſe even towards them, who ſeldom fail to treat us and our holy faith deſpitefully and contemptuouſly, as far as they can, all the humanity, candour and friendlineſs, that is conſiſtent with being *undefiled and ſeparate from ſinners* ¶. Much more be mild towards profeſſed Chriſtians, who ſeem either on the one hand too rigid, or on the other defective, in faith or practice. Guard yourſelves againſt both extremes; warn them, if properly called to it; but otherwiſe leave them *to their own maſter, to ſtand or fall* **. Even ſhould any of them be ſo ill-informed or ill-tempered, as to think or ſpeak ſlightly or harſhly of you perſonally, or of your ſocieties, *inſtruct them in meekneſs* ††, if there be hope of ſetting them right, if not, bear with them in ſilence, and be content with the teſtimony of a good conſcience.

In

* Col. iii. 1, 2. † Tit. iii. 2. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 8.
§ Eph. iv. 28. ‖ John xiii. 34. ¶ Heb. vii. 26.
** Rom. xiv. 4. †† 2 Tim. ii. 25.

In proportion as each of you ſingly obſerves or tranſgreſſes theſe goſpel rules, he will bring honour or ſhame on himſelf, on the particular body to which he belongs, on theſe aſſemblies in general. And their influencing their members effectually to eminent goodneſs, is the beſt, indeed the only ſtrong argument, that you can uſe to invite others into them. Therefore take eſpecial care, that you may always be able to uſe that with truth. For this end, beware, in the firſt place, of letting your conferences degenerate into *form without power**, into lukewarmneſs and ſupineneſs, *a name that you live*, while indeed you *are dead* †; and if there have been any tendency this way, *remember from whence you are fallen* ‡; *be zealous and repent* §, and pray God to *revive his work in the midſt of the years* ||. Beware, in the next place, of running into controverſies and diſputes. You have wiſely guarded againſt theſe, by admitting ſuch perſons only as are well affected to our preſent happy eſtabliſhment in church and ſtate. Guard againſt them ſtill further, by avoiding to debate any unneceſſary points of any kind. Never, indeed, ſlight what God hath plainly taught, but never inſiſt on what he hath not: about all needleſs queſtions, allow different opinions amongſt yourſelves, without talking of them; neither cenſure thoſe of others, nor preſs your own. In matters of practical religion, indeed, you not only may, but ought to be earneſt. Yet even there, deſpiſe not good perſons of leſs fervent diſpoſitions; and heat not one another, or yourſelves, into unmeaning or injudicious tranſports, but let your piety be at once an affectionate and *a reaſonable ſervice* ¶. Be mutually helpful, if you properly can, even in temporal affairs: for the apoſtle hath directed us to do *good, eſpecially unto them that are of the houſehold of faith* **, and therefore ſurely to thoſe whom we have the beſt ground to think worthy members of that houſehold. But your principal concern, beyond all compariſon, is to promote your common good in ſpirituals; to *comfort yourſelves together, and edify one another, even as ye do* ††. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, to reſtore ſuch a one*

* 2 Tim. iii. 5. † Rev. iii. 1. ‡ Rev. ii. 5.
§ Rev. iii. 19. || Hab. iii. 2. ¶ Rom. xii. 1.
** Gal. vi. 10. †† 1 Theſſ. v. 11.

in the ſpirit of meekneſs, each *conſidering himſelf, leſt he alſo be tempted* *; to *ſuffer the word of exhortation* †, and even of rebuke, with patience, according to that of the Pſalmiſt, *Let the righteous ſmite me friendly and reprove me* ‡; and of *Solomon, He that rebuketh a man, ſhall afterwards find more favour, than he that flattereth with the tongue* §. Nay, ſhould any one by his behaviour oblige you to *have no* longer *company with him, that he may be aſhamed*, yet the precepts of Chriſtian charity bind you, *not to count him an enemy*, but ſtill, ſo far as there is any room left, *admoniſh him as a brother* ‖. But, brethren, though I ſpeak thus *boldly to you, as putting you in mind*, yet I *am perſuaded of you, that ye are full of goodneſs, and all knowledge, able to admoniſh one another* ¶, without foreign aſſiſtance. And therefore I add only my hearty prayers, *that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be ſincere and without offence till the day of Chriſt, being filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt unto the glory and praiſe of God* **.

* Gal. vi. 1. † Heb. xiii. 22. ‡ Pſ. cxli. 5.
§ Prov. xxviii. 23. ‖ 2 Theſſ. iii. 14, 15. ¶ Rom. xv. 14, 15.
** Phil. i. 9, 10, 11.

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